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Patience and Jemmy "by the riverside."

THE
Four Sisters:

PATIENCE, HUMILITY, HOPE, & LOVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"HARRY AND HIS HOMES,"
ETC. ETC.

"Meeter were I not for heaven,
Till by love my works were crown'd,
Till in love my strength were found."
LYRA GERMANICA.

A New Edition, with Illustrations.

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1858.



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TO THE

Elder Daughters of my Poorer Neighbours,

THIS BOOK

IS MORE PARTICULARLY DEDICATED.



In our inestimable Sunday Schools they have been already taught the nature and necessity of that "Heaven-born gift,"—the gift of Charity,—which is the external bond of Christian brotherhood; but in these little tales it is my wish to remind them how it may—nay, must—be brought into their homes, and made to shed a holy light upon the pleasures and the business of every day.

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THE FOUR SISTERS.

Little Patience.

CHAPTER I.

"It beareth all things."

"Childlike though the voices be,
And untunable the parts,
Thou wilt own the minstrelsy,
If it flow from childlike hearts."—KEBLE.

WHEN the Angel of the Lord, on the first bright Christmas morning, sent forth the glad cry of "Glory to God, on earth good-will," he ushered in the welcome dawn of the kingdom of charity, which is the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the kingdom of peace and love.

"Little children, love one another!"—then may you enter into this kingdom, which on earth is charity, and includes all gentle virtues. First, as we are told by St. Paul, "it suffereth long:" and this is patience.

I once knew a little girl who was called Patience, and whose life in after-years answered to her name. Her mother was a laundress, a hard-working honest woman, and her father a carpenter, who was much respected by all good people in the parish, for he was

never seen at public-houses, was kind to his neighbours, upright in all his ways, and went to church with his wife, and afterwards with his children also, twice every Sunday.

Abraham Jackson, and his wife Keziah, were indeed quoted as a model pair. Their house was always neat and clean. In one corner of the well-scoured kitchen stood a handsome eight-day clock; another held an old buffet of glass and china; the dresser contained a good supply of useful ware, and the rest of the substantial furniture showed them to be well off in the world. And when, in the afternoon, the great sleek cat lay down upon the hearth-rug, that was then spread before the bright fireside, with Abraham's great arm-chair at one side and a long settle at the other, Pussy might have been excused for looking proud of her position. Sometimes, in the chimney-corner, there was a cradle too, which Keziah rocked with her foot as she knitted her husband's woollen socks, and listened to him whilst he read the newspaper aloud, or told what he had seen or heard during the day. But, alas! in this cradle Keziah had rocked none but boys; two, John and James, were big enough to run alone, and the good woman much regretted that they had not had a sister.

"It is true that the boys can be brought up to your trade. No doubt they will be handy soon, to hold your nails for you, or to run your errands; but I had rather, Abraham, that one of them had been a girl, that could have stayed with me, and would have been a comfort to us both when the boys will have to be doing for themselves away from home."

And thus had Keziah grumbled, unlike her usual

contented self, until Abraham one day said, "Where is your patience, wife? it is not often that I hear you grumble so."

And in a moment's pet she answered, "Well, Abraham, I am resolved on one thing, if I should ever have a girl, that I will call her 'Patience.'"

"And a good name too," said Abraham. "And, wife, remember that I'll hold you to your word, though I scarcely think you meant it."

Before the summer days had passed away, the cradle was once more in the chimney-corner, and the boys had got a sister. Not a word was said about the name of the welcome daughter, until the time came for Keziah to return thanks to God at church. Then Abraham said, "Now, wife, suppose I take a holiday to-morrow, and we'll have brother Jem and Mary over, and your cousin Nanny, if you like; and then we can have the child christened, and give them a bit of dinner when it's over."

His wife agreed; so Abraham sent his apprentice over to the next town, where his brother lived, to ask him and his wife to come and be sponsors for the little girl; and he went himself to invite Nanny Kitson, and to ask Mrs. Brown, a kind active widow, who lived near them, to come and cook the dinner, and keep the house, and mind the boys, whilst they were at church; but not one word was said as yet, either by himself or his wife, about the name of their little girl.

It was not mentioned, indeed, until they were setting off to church, Keziah leaning on Nanny's arm, and Abraham carrying the child; for he had said that no one but himself should take his girl to be made a Christian; when Jem stopped short, and said,—“Why, brother,

here we be come to name the child, and nobody has said yet what she has to be called. I suppose you've thought of something?"

"My wife and I settled that long ago," said Abraham, quietly; "she is to be called 'Patience.'"

"Patience!" cried Jem; "well, that is a queer name, to be sure."

"Patience!" exclaimed Mary, who had expected it to be called after her. "How bad it is to say; and there is no shortening to it either."

"It is the name of a good thing," observed Nanny, who was a pious woman; "and I hope that she will do credit to it."

Regarding it as settled, they said no more, but walked on to church, where the little one was sprinkled with the token of the cleansing blood of Christ, and signed with His sign, whose faithful soldier and servant they prayed she might become; repentance and faith were promised for her by her sureties, and then they gave her her Christian name; and so it was that the little girl was called Patience.

Little Patience was rocked in the cradle for many a week after this; but in time, like other babies, she grew too big for the cradle, and no longer needed rocking; and being a fine strong child, before she was twelve months old she could run alone, much to the boys' delight. They were very kind to her—Jemmy, the younger one, particularly. He was a quieter lad than John at all times, and his mother could trust the baby with him well. He would sit for an hour with her on the bench outside the window-sill, keeping her amused with showing her the carts and horses passing, or even the children playing,

or the milkman with his shining cans; and the little thing would crow and clap her tiny hands, as you know a well-nursed baby will do.

In the summer-time Jemmy would take her farther, into the big pasture by the river-side, and there he would gather buttercups and daisies for her, and sing to her, or tell her little stories, such as his mother had told to him. And if he saw the baby looking up at the bright sky, he would say, "That is where the good God lives. Heaven is there. Heaven is a far nicer place than this pasture, and everybody there is happy."

Little Patience did not know that everybody was not happy here too, nor Jemmy either, then; but she used to listen to him, with her large blue eyes full of wonder fixed on his face; and though she could not understand all her brother said to her, she liked to hear him talk. And when she grew older, and he still took her out into the big pasture, she would point upwards with her own tiny finger and say, "The good God lives there." Then Jemmy would go on to tell her that God would only take good people up to heaven, and if the child was fretful or disobedient at home, he had only to lead her out into the big pasture, and she would become mild and sweet again. And many little hymns and prayers did Patience learn from Jemmy as they sat out in that green field; and his mother said that Jemmy was as good a nurse as any one need wish to trust a baby to.

John was different. He was a rather wild, high-spirited boy, never still, often in a mischief, and required much firmness on his father's part to keep him in order; but he was always gentle with his little sister, and minded what his mother had constantly told them, that

it was their place to watch over her, and keep her out of the way of harm, never to be boisterous or ungainly with her, as some strong lads might be, and then some day she would be a comfort and a help to them, as sisters ought to be.

But Jemmy could not continue being his little sister's nurse; for when he was old enough, he went regularly with John to school. Their father set a great value upon education, and gave them the best he could. "For it is a treasure, boys," as he said to them one day, "which cannot be taken away from you. You might lose riches, if you had them; you might lose health and strength, and friends; but education you would still have, to help you to replace the one, or to comfort you under the loss of the other. So mind you stick to it, boys, whilst you can get it, and never leave a hard lesson till you have learnt it; don't let a few crabbed figures get the better of you, have no blots or mistakes in your copy-books, and learn to read your Bible as well and as usefully as your mother has done, and then I shall never grudge your schooling. Some day I shall want John for my head man, you know; and as for Jemmy, what will you be, my boy?"

"I know what I should like to be best of all," said Jemmy, hanging down his head, and colouring up to the roots of his hair.

"Speak out, man, do not be afraid," said Abraham.

"What is it, Jemmy dear?" said his mother.

But Jemmy only cried out, "No, mother, it's not possible," and ran away to the pasture, which was still his favourite haunt.

His mother did not press him about it when he came back,—she thought it was time enough to decide on little

Jemmy's trade ; and it was not till many years afterwards that she knew that the treasured dream of his young heart had been to become a clergyman, and go out to foreign parts to make the poor heathens Christians ; it was this grand scheme that poor Jemmy's humble mind thought he was not worthy of, and that made him say, "No, mother, it's not possible."

Meanwhile Patience was growing up to be the sweetest little girl in the village. She had a nice round fair face, with light-brown hair, cut short, and brushed straight away behind her ears ; her dark-blue eyes sparkled like sunbeams, and her little cherry mouth had a smile for every one. Her mother had already made her a tidy child, and if her little pinafore wanted a string, she could get her little workbox out and sew it on again. Her greatest pleasure was to help her mother in the house, or to run errands for her, which she could be trusted well to do, for she had a straightforward way of doing everything, and would never have stopped to play or loiter on the road. Her mother had taught her the letters, but the whole family helped to teach her other things ; for Jemmy used generally to tell her every day what he had learned at school ; John used to rule lines and set copies for her on his slate ; and her father, when he was reading in the evening, would say, "Here is a hard word for you, my dear ;" and Patience would run to him, and spell it out, until she was able to read whole sentences by herself.

Jemmy was very fond of teaching her, for he loved books almost better than anything ; but he was a delicate boy, and he often had bad headaches, and then he used to wish that he had no lessons to learn, and he did not

like to get up soon in the mornings; but he used to grieve over these lazy feelings, and one day he said to his little sister, as they sat together by the river-side, "Oh, Patience, I sometimes wish I was a bird."

"What for?" asked Patience, although she thought that she should like it too, when she saw the lark rise straight out of his grassy nest, and heard the missel-thrush sing sweetly in the sycamores.

"Do you remember that verse last Sunday in the Psalms," replied her brother,—"'O that I had wings, then would I flee away and be at rest?' When I think of that, I fancy that I should like to flee away from my headaches, and my idleness, and be at rest in heaven."

"Would you leave us, Jemmy?" asked Patience, looking startled.

"I do not want to leave you," said Jemmy. "I am frightened to die, and people must die before they can go to heaven; but I am often so idle and so discontented"—here Jemmy's voice sank, and the tears came into his eyes;—"and I am afraid that I shall grow worse, and then God would forsake me."

And here Jemmy fairly cried, and Patience trembled, and did not know how to comfort him, except by putting her arm gently round his neck. At last a bright thought came into her head, and she said, "Oh, Jemmy! the Lord Jesus will help you;" and as she said the name that she had already learnt to love, the little girl reverently bowed her head. "You know what the hymn says—

" 'Little children, come to Jesus,
Then you will be safe and blest;
Happy now, and safe for ever:
Come to Him, and be at rest!'

If you ask the Lord Jesus to help you, He always will, mother says; and then you would grow better, and you would be at rest without going away, Jemmy."

As the little girl said this, in her simple, earnest way, Jemmy stooped down, and kissing her tenderly, said, "I had forgotten, darling. I know now why I was so tired. I will pray to the Lord for help. Now let us go home;" and Jemmy smiled to himself, as he thought of the little Patience becoming his teacher. And thus was the child beginning already to be a comfort to her brothers.

Not that Patience was a faultless child. She had very early shown the contrary; and to her mother's dismay, the fault she was the most given to was impatience. When she was a very little girl, she would scream and cry if she did not get what she was to have at once; and if what she was busy with did not come right directly, she would throw it down impatiently. Her brother John used to like to see her in these pets, and sometimes teased her on purpose, by setting her a very tedious sum, or by entangling her knitting-balls. But his mother, if she saw it, always stopped him. Elder brothers and sisters often do not reflect what an influence they may have upon the little ones, and for their own amusement provoke passions which might become dreadful afterwards. And her mother, with the most patient care herself, had tried to nourish this lovely grace in her little girl. Her father, too, when Patience had once been screaming because she was not allowed to go with her brothers to a fair in the next town, told her that she deserved to lose her good name; "for," said he, "to you the name is nothing without the reality; and if you had the real *patience*, you would be able to bear disappointment, and

forbear to be vexed about it; you would be able to wait quietly, until the proper time came for you to have what you wished for, and you would suffer unkindness or pain without a murmur. We shall be sorry that we gave you the good name, if you do not try to deserve it."

But Patience did try. Every year, as she grew older she grew better, more good and patient, and thus it was that she so soon became a helping sister to her brothers, and a comfort to her father and mother.

When she was old enough, she went to school; and here, of course, she met with difficult lessons, and long seams, and rude, unkind girls; but if an impatient thought arose, she used to say, "I am losing my Christian name again;" and striving with all her might to put it away again, no one ever saw her cross or angry, and there were few people in the village that did not love little Patience.

CHAPTER II.

“Till Thou bid its passions cease,
Lord, it never can have peace ;
Never change its wicked will,
Till thou whisper, ‘ Peace, be still.’ ”

PARISH MUSINGS.

ONE day, when Patience had grown up to be quite a right hand to her mother, news came that her uncle James was very ill of a fever, and that his wife had caught it too. This was the uncle James who had come to her christening ; indeed, they both had stood for her ; but they had sadly neglected their duty, and it was well for Patience that her father and mother had taken such good care of her. For some years Patience had never even seen her godfather and godmother ; for James Jackson had, soon after the birth of Patience, fallen into drunken habits, driven to it, like many other men of weak principles, by the bad temper and untidiness of his wife. The usual consequences of poverty and unhappiness had followed ; the only point in which the wretched wife would agree with her husband, was in scorning the brotherly advice of Abraham ; and for some time their house had been one into which he would not have liked his wife and innocent children to enter.

Hence it was by mere accident that they heard about the fever. As soon as Abraham told his wife this dismal news, she said, “ Poor things, who will there be to nurse them ? I must go over, Abraham, and see about it.”

But Abraham would not hear of her going within reach of the infection, and for the sake of the children desired that she would give up the idea. For himself he had no fear, and without an hour's delay he set off to ascertain the real nature of the case.

It had not been exaggerated. When Abraham arrived at the dirty little house inhabited by his brother and his wife, he found them both lying in a high state of fever, without any one to attend upon them except a charitable widow, who had stepped in night and morning, the only leisure time she had, to see how they were going on, and to place a little water by their bed-side. Their only child, who was a year or two younger than Patience, had been taken by another neighbour as soon as her father had been seized, and for fear of infection for her own children, she would not allow her to return to them for a moment.

The parish was about to provide a nurse ; but it was at a time when the sufferers were quite alone that Abraham entered this abode of misery. It was a dreadful scene ; dirt and poverty around them, and in their own breasts nothing but despair. The life of a drunkard is a poor preparation for a death-bed. Spent partly in unconsciousness, partly in useless remorse, if the close comes suddenly, what hope, what peace can there be ? Abraham felt all this bitterly, as he resolved that his wife should not be exposed to its horrors. Meanwhile, he went himself to ask the clergyman to come and see his miserable relatives, and then proceeded to procure them every attendance and comfort that his savings enabled him to afford.

After staying with them till late in the afternoon, and seeing them in a more comfortable position, Abraham,

with kind words, bid them good night, promising to go back early in the morning.

When his wife had heard of the wretched situation in which he had found the poor creatures, she could hardly be prevailed upon to give up her intention of going to their assistance. Abraham, however, was firm in not giving his consent to it. A stout woman had been hired as nurse, and he had left them every comfort ; but his wife should not run the risk of being there.

“At any rate, then,” she said, “bring the girl back with you. She will be best with her own flesh and blood ; and if anything should happen to poor James and Mary, it would be a comfort to them to know that the child was safe and well cared for.”

Much had, indeed, happened already. When Abraham reached the town next morning, he found that poor Mary had died in the night, and that he was only just in time to afford a slight consolation to his brother’s last moments, by promising to be a father to his child. Then, without lingering in the house of death longer than was necessary to see that everything proper was performed, Abraham next went to the house that for the present sheltered the poor orphan.

Ill news travels quickly ; Dorothy had been already told of her dreadful loss, and she was now screaming and tossing her hands about in frantic grief. Abraham himself, sore troubled, knew not how to comfort her. Four days ago she was living in thoughtless ease, never dreaming of greater sorrow than the drunkenness and quarrelling which had become too common to be much trouble to her ; and now she had neither father, nor mother, nor home ! The poor girl, indeed, seemed desolate ; and yet

what untold good was to arise for her out of this apparent desolation.

When her uncle could find words, he took hold of her hand, and said, kindly,—

“Don’t grieve so sadly, Dorothy; you shall come to our house, and my boys and Patience will be brothers and sister to you.”

“I don’t want any brothers and sisters,” screamed the girl, more loudly than before; “I won’t go away with you; I want my own father and mother. Oh, mother!” With this piteous cry, she threw her arms out again, as if vainly seeking her, and she would not be comforted. Abraham was relieved when she exhausted herself with the violence of her grief; and throwing herself down upon a bed, she fell asleep.

At the suggestion of the neighbour who had sheltered her, Abraham took this opportunity of removing her. He quickly borrowed a light tax-cart belonging to a cabinet-maker whom he knew; and when it arrived, he gently lifted Dorothy himself into the cart, and allowing the boy who brought it to drive, he supported her so carefully with his strong arm, that they were able to drive off without disturbing the heavy slumber into which she had fallen.

A little knot of pitying neighbours crowded round to see the child’s departure. Many came merely from curiosity, and talked freely about the sudden judgment that had come upon the drunkard and his wife; others wiped away a tear of sympathy; and one said, “It seems a shame to call the death of any one a blessing; but surely theirs will prove a good thing for that poor neglected creature, now that Abraham has taken her.”

It was late in the afternoon before they arrived at

home. There everything was prepared to give a welcome to the stranger; the hearth clean swept, the fire bright, the kettle singing gaily, and the tea set out upon the table. The boys, since they came from school, had been making themselves useful in fetching water and chopping wood, and were now sitting by the fire; and Patience, who had also been very busy, was now, like them, waiting with great anxiety for the new sister that she hoped to see. They were all chattering together, and John had just been saying something so funny that Patience was laughing merrily, when her mother stopped her by saying,—

“Hush! honey, this will be your father: he must have brought Dorothy, or he would have walked.”

And as she spoke, a strange lad opened the door, and Abraham walked in, carrying in his arms a great heavy girl, whose face was leaning on his shoulder. The children had started up to welcome them, but their mother had caught a glimpse of her husband’s sorrowful face, and she said,—

“Whisht, honies, whisht!” and they were silent at once, and watched their father whilst he laid his burden on the long settle; and then, turning to his wife, said, “It’s all over, honey; and I have brought the poor orphan home to thee.”

His wife was sadly shocked, and for a minute she could not speak, whilst the children saw that strangely-touching sight, the strong man’s tears, as their father sat down in his arm-chair, and wept over the playmate of his childhood,—the brother he had lost.

Meanwhile the stranger was sitting up on the couch, in a dreamy state, gazing with stupid sleepy eyes around her. Suddenly she cried out, “Oh, mother!” and flung

herself down in a new agony, as her memory returned. Her cousins looked on in pitying wonder as she screamed and rolled about; such fearful grief was happily unknown to them. Their mother, with the greatest tenderness, endeavoured to soothe her, and though she was at first repulsed, the screams ceased, and Dorothy lay quiet. Then Keziah said,—

“Now, Abraham, man, have some tea, and do not grieve so sorely. It is a bitter and a sudden thing, but it is the Lord that has done it, and we must submit.” And as she spoke, Keziah wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron, that she might see to pour out the tea.

Her husband took what she pressed upon him, but he never spoke; and the children, awe-struck by such sorrow, took their tea also in silence. As soon as their mother had served them all round, she poured out another cup, and, bending kindly over Dorothy, she said,

“Now, honey, here’s some tea for you, it will do you good.”

The girl just looked up, and then, with an angry push, sent the whole of the hot tea over her aunt’s hand and arm, and down upon the hearth. The boys were indignant, and Patience started up; but when her mother only said, “Poor child, Gold help thee!” she only got a soft cloth, and gently dried her mother’s hand, whilst the cat licked up what had been spilt below.

When they had finished tea, and Patience had washed up, they all sat round the fire in silence, leaving the long settle for poor Dorothy. Patience cast many longing looks that way, and at last she could refrain no longer; and, taking the little stool of cherry wood that John had made her when she was a little girl, she sat down beside

her cousin, and ventured to take the cold damp hand, that was hanging down, in hers.

Dorothy started, and drew her hand away; but when she looked up and saw only the sweet pitying eyes of Patience, she let her hand go back again, and renewed her sobbing, but more quietly than before. Thus encouraged, Patience stayed beside her, and in a little time she even ventured to put her arm around her, and to give her a gentle kiss. Dorothy soon afterwards became uneasy, and Patience asked her if she would like to go to bed. Dorothy gave no answer; but at last she yielded to Patience's gentle entreaties, and consented to be led upstairs, with weary steps, to the neat room that she was to share with her cousin.

"Yes," said her mother, when Patience and the poor Dorothy had left the kitchen, "bed will be the best place for her, poor thing; her trouble is very great, and she seems ill-prepared to bear it. If she only takes to our Patience, I have little fear but she'll get over it. Still it is a sore trial for one so young."

A sigh was all the answer Abraham gave for some time; then he said,

"Sore, indeed! Oh, wife! if you had but seen the end, as I did; but it is too dreadful to talk about. May the Lord have mercy on them both! I have thought, Keziah, that we might have done more for them than we have—that we might have tried to win them from their evil paths."

"Nay, Abraham," replied his wife; "I'm sure you were always a thoughtful brother to poor James. However, if we have failed in anything towards them, we must try to make it up to this poor child."

"We will," said Abraham; "and, boys, let it be a warning for ever for you; that you may always strive to live in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, turning aside from everything that is unholy or impure, and working out your salvation patiently,—that when He calls you, you may be ready. Some day, when I can bear it, you shall hear the horrors of your poor uncle's end."

Patience came downstairs as her father spoke; but it was only to bid good night; for she thought that perhaps Dorothy would not like to be left alone.

"That is right, my dear," said her mother, kissing her; "mind that you do not forget to pray for her, poor thing."

"Yes, honey," said her father, "for she has come amongst us needy and desolate, a poor stray lamb, to be sheltered, and warmed, and comforted. She will likely enough be troublesome at times, for she has been sadly neglected; but let the dead rest, and may we all cherish her, and bear patiently with her faults, and try to lead her to the Lord of life. And may God bless you, my child, and prosper you in your loving ways;" and Patience bent her head reverently to receive her sorrowing father's blessing, and then went back to her orphan cousin.

Abraham might well prophesy that their new charge would prove troublesome at times. It seemed as if a cloud had risen, on that sad night, over their hitherto untroubled dwelling, which even the daughter's care and sunny smiles could not drive away.

After the first violence, Dorothy's grief was sullen. There were no more bursts of passion; but she would sit

for hours by the fireside, discarding all comfort, answering crossly if she spoke at all, and seeming to think it a hardship to have to get out of the way when Patience wanted to clean the hearth or sweep the floor. She joined them at their meals, because her uncle was there, and she dared not refuse; but she would scarcely eat anything, and her aunt was afraid she would be starved, until she found out that Dorothy only waited till her back was turned, and then went to the cupboard, where she cut herself great slices of bread and cheese, and devoured them in haste.

The boys tried at first to amuse her; but she would not make friends with them, and sat in the evenings like a gloomy shadow upon the hearth. Jemmy was still kind to her; but John very soon got tired, and declared that he disliked her, and heartily wished she had never come amongst them. This was only said to Patience; but she looked grieved, and answered,—

“Wait a while, Johnnie, she has not got over her sorrow yet,—she’ll be better by-and-by, may-be.”

“Ay, may-be, indeed, Patience,” was all John’s scornful reply, as he went out to his work.

Dorothy certainly was a little trial to them all, but, except John, none of them grumbled at it. The first thing that her aunt busied herself with after Dorothy arrived, was to supply her with proper clothes, for she had none with her; and, indeed, from the account the neighbours gave, there would be none left in the dirty infected house that were worth bringing away. So materials were bought, Patience was kept at home from school, and she and her mother set to work that they might clothe the orphan properly. For two days they had Margaret Tindal in the house to help them, for there were

black dresses to make for themselves as well, and Dorothy was no assistance to them. Her aunt offered her some work, but she took no notice; and thinking that perhaps it was too soon to trouble the poor girl, she did not press it on her. It was some reward for their pains, that the first gleam of animation they had seen in Dorothy was on Sunday, when she was dressed in her neat new mourning. Before that, she might have been made of stone, as John, indeed, remarked.

Patience still went to school, except when her mother was very busy, and on the ironing-day, when she always stayed at home to help; and her mother resolved that Dorothy should lose no more time, but, now that she was properly dressed, should go to school at once, where she hoped that employment and cheerful companions would rouse her up. The effect was greater and more speedy than she had expected, and Dorothy was roused up to be as actively disagreeable as she had formerly been silently so.

The first sentiment she showed was jealousy of her cousin. Patience having gone regularly to school since she was a little girl, was now in the first class, and was quite trusted by the mistress. Dorothy, on the contrary, though she had been entered at the National school of the town in which she had always lived, had been one of the worst attenders; indeed, she had only gone when she liked, or when her mother, in a bad humour, had sent her to be out of the way. As might be expected, therefore, she was a bad reader, could scarcely write at all, her sewing was not better than that of a child of six years old, and she was placed amongst the little girls, to her great annoyance.

To be so far below Patience was intolerable to Dorothy; and as she was clever enough, she soon made great progress, so, though still unamiable, and no favourite with the mistress, she was obliged to be advanced in the school. Her cousins were soon astonished at the change in her. Casting aside her sorrow, which, indeed, was more passion and wilfulness than tender remembrance of her parents, she was often in the wildest spirits, saucy, and full of tricks and mischief, and under the control of no one except her uncle, of whom she still retained a wholesome fear.

Her gentle cousin was quite overcome by Dorothy's boisterous ways; and though she never would be drawn away by any of Dorothy's wild pranks, she was content to wait upon her. But John soon discovered that Patience was what he called "put upon" by her selfish cousin, and he complained to his mother. She saw that he was partly right, and she gently but firmly insisted upon Dorothy learning to be useful in the house; and as she was supported in this by her husband, Dorothy dared not disobey; but she contrived to do everything so unhandily, that in her apparent attempts at being useful, she gave far more trouble than she had done before.

Patience always quietly followed Dorothy in her work, and smoothed it over, that her mother might not be annoyed; and no teasing, no blackening of her clean irons, or hiding of her work-materials, could provoke an angry speech from her. "She will know better by-and-by," was the feeling that Patience always acted on.

One day, however, even her forbearance was sadly tried.

CHAPTER III.

“Then live and suffer, do and bear,
As Christ, thy pattern, here hath done ;
And seek His innocence to wear,
That He may count thee of His own.”

WE have mentioned Margaret Tindal, who came to help them to make their mourning. She was a young girl about eighteen, and a friend of both Patience and her mother. It had pleased God to afflict her grievously ; she could only move about with the help of a crutch, and she often suffered excessive pain. But there was a beauty in her mind which a thoughtful person could not have overlooked ; and the pure, tranquil expression on her face more than compensated for her plainness. She had, besides, delicate, nimble fingers, and by her pains-taking at the school she had acquired great skill in needlework, and, being one of a numerous and sickly family, she was glad to support herself by going out to sew or by taking in fine work at home. Mrs. Jackson was often able to recommend her to repair or make up the laces that she had starched ; and being respected in the village, Margaret seldom wanted work.

One day Margaret was sent for to the Hall to receive an order from a very rich young lady who was staying there. This young lady had been pleased with some work that Margaret had done for the Misses Sidney, and she wanted a set of fine cambric chemisettes and sleeves

to be made for her immediately. She gave Margaret the material, and told her that, as she was going to pay another visit on a certain day, she must have them finished and got up ready to put on, in time to pack up for her journey.

She offered good payment, if they were only done in time; and Margaret thankfully accepted the employment, and promised to have them ready. She had to work almost night and day to finish them, for there was much fine stitching about them, and when they were nearly done, she went in the twilight, when she could not see to sew, on to Mrs. Jackson's, to ask if she could do them up for her.

"Oh, mother," said Patience, "do you think I could manage them? I should so like to try."

"I should pay you, you know," said Margaret. "The young lady said I was to charge anything that was reasonable for the washing, only they must be well done."

"That of course they should be," said Mrs. Jackson, "for the credit of our village; but I think I may say that Patience is as able to do them as any one—she has improved a great deal lately; so if you like to trust them to her, Margaret, she shall have the job, and what she earns by it may go towards paying for a pair of good winter boots, which I know she wants."

Patience was much gratified by her mother's praise, and very glad to oblige her friend, though she would rather not have taken any pay for it; and the next morning, instead of going to school, she prepared everything she should require, and then, putting on her bonnet, she slipped away to Margaret's for the things,

that she might save her the trouble of bringing them. Much as Patience loved Margaret, she never much liked going to see her in her own home; for her mother was a sickly, fretful woman, worn down with poverty and her large family, and everything looked wretched in the room that Margaret had to work in.

She found her sitting near the window, where she could have the most light; but she had laid aside her work for a minute, that she might soothe the baby, who had woke up crying. There were two other children near her, both looking cross and dirty, and a pan upon the fire was bubbling over and hissing into the fire.

"Just take that pan off, Patience dear, will you? I have my hands full at present, for Jemima has gone out to a day's nursing, and mother has stepped down to borrow Ellen Eden's possing-tub."

Patience had seen Mrs. Tindal gossiping at Eden's as she passed, and had rejoiced rather, that she would be out; but she pitied Margaret, and thought that she had her hands full indeed.

"And how do you manage to keep your fine work so nice and clean?" said Patience, taking the baby next, that Margaret might collect the things for her.

"It is not always so clean as I should like," said Margaret; "but a great deal may be done by trying, Patience."

"I see that," replied the other, smiling; "but, Margaret, I wonder you don't sometimes get tired of trying."

"Now don't you try to put me out of heart," said Margaret, shaking her head at Patience. "Am I not a little stronger than I was last year? have I not the use of my hands always, and plenty of work for them? and can I

not get to church every Sunday? I have a great deal to encourage me to try, my dear, and a great deal to be thankful for."

She had made up the bundle now, and her mother coming in with the passing-tub, Patience only stayed to speak civilly to her, and then made her escape, telling Margaret that she would be sure to have them done in time to take up to the Hall that evening.

"I don't wonder now that Margaret seems to think everything so beautiful and nice in our house, when she comes to spend an afternoon with us," said Patience to herself, as she went homewards; "but if she has much to be thankful for, what have I? There's Margaret herself and Jemmy to begin with; I am always learning something good from them. And then there is father and mother;" but Patience had not finished counting up all the good things that she had to be thankful for when she arrived at her own home, where she had to set to work directly. Very busy she was all day.

"Don't speak to me, Jemmy, please," she said at noon; "this is something very important." And John said she looked as if the fate of the nation hung upon the smoothness of her folds of cambric. Even her mother smiled to see the earnestness that Patience was ironing with: she knew that it was partly prompted by her affection for Margaret; but without this, it was the child's way, as her mother said, to do everything with all her might.

By five o'clock the work was all done. Patience, as she laid each snowy chemisette and pair of sleeves in the small clothes-basket, looked at them with tenderness, and could not help wishing that her mother would return

in time to see them before Margaret came to take them away. She had gone out to inquire after Ann Saunder's baby, who had been seized with croup the night before, and was in some danger; and if Ann needed help, Patience knew that her mother would not leave her. Her father would be coming in, however, so she must be making tea ready. Dorothy had been told to come home in time to do this, but she had not thought fit to comply; so Patience set the kettle on, and began to get the tea-things out. She had gone into the closet where the things were kept, when she was startled by hearing a loud rude laugh; and coming out again, she saw Dorothy, looking full of mischief, standing near the table where she had left the clothes-basket.

Dreading something, she knew not what, she hastily went up to the table, and there, struggling and mewling, covered with wet and mud, in the middle of the clean stiff chemisettes, was their own old cat. Patience was speechless; she could not understand this, and she looked at Dorothy. Another loud laugh was the reply; and when she saw the tears starting to Patience's eyes, she only said, "I was fetching Puss home, and she ran away from me into the gutter, and covered herself with mud."

"Margaret will be coming for them directly," said Patience, sadly, and two tears rolled quietly down her cheeks.

"Well, I didn't mean to drop her quite in, I only wanted to frighten you," said Dorothy.

This was enough for Patience. She answered, "I thought you did not mean it;" and taking the cat gently out of the basket, she spread a bit of carpet on

the hearth, and laid her there to dry. Then she stirred the fire, and putting back the irons with a little sigh, she said,—

“Dorothy, will you get tea ready? I am going to see if I can do these things over again, and father will be in presently.”

“Oh, now,” thought Dorothy, “she’s going to tell her father; that’s why she takes it so quietly. I shall be in a pretty mess;” and, rather sobered at the thought, she bustled about to make tea ready. Then Patience turned towards the clothes-basket, that she might examine the extent of the damage. One chemisette was spoiled entirely, another cuff was soiled, and the edges of four were touched, and the sides of the basket were quite dirty. She began to separate them very carefully, when, as she was thus employed, she heard a gentle knock at the door, and Margaret Tindal entered, followed by a very smart young woman.

This was the young lady’s maid, and she had come on purpose for her mistress’s things.

“I am very sorry, Margaret,” said Patience, as she saw her glance with dismay at the muddy cambric; “they were all quite ready for you, but——”

She paused in doubt between her desire to speak the truth and her dislike to tell of Dorothy.

“But I let the cat fall in amongst them, and they are spoiled,” said Dorothy, relieving her cousin by a fearless avowal of her mischief.

“Oh, Dorothy!” cried Margaret.

“This is a pretty business!” cried the lady’s-maid. “Here is my mistress has trusted you with a quantity of the finest French cambric, ten shillings a yard, if it was

a penny, and here you let two girls have it just to amuse themselves with, as it appears to me."

"Please don't be angry with Margaret," said Patience to the lady's-maid; "she knew that we had often been trusted with the finest lace and cambric, and she had no fears. I am very sorry; but if you will kindly wait an hour or two, they shall be as nice as ever; I am just going to do them up again."

"You," said the young woman scornfully, looking at the slight pretty girl before her, "why you don't mean to say that you could get up my young lady's things?"

"Indeed she can," put in Margaret eagerly; "look at these," she added, pointing to the sleeves that had been untouched, "she did these; don't you think they are beautifully got up?"

"Well," said the lady's-maid, looking at them with a secret wonder, which she would not show, "this is as strange a part of the country as I ever was in, and I've travelled with my ladies far and wide. But the question is, Can I have these things to pack up to-night?"

"Oh, yes," said Patience; "you shall have them by seven o'clock. I dare say that one of my brothers will bring them up to the Hall."

"It is no matter to me who brings them," was the answer, "as long as I have them to put into my young lady's trunks to-night. It seems a queer business to me; however, my young lady trusted the cambric, I suppose, to you, Miss Tindal, and you will be answerable for it."

"To be sure I will," said Margaret, rather indignantly. "I am only sorry, Patience, my dear, that you should have so much trouble on my account."

"Nay," said Patience, smiling, "it's I that should be



Mary and Sandy find Robert Eyre by the River. Page 29.

sorry for making you seem to be breaking your word; however, I am going to set to work directly."

"And we are stopping you," said Margaret; "so good night; I will come back for them at seven."

"Good night!" said the lady's-maid, and she followed Margaret, uncertain whether to throw away her suspicions of this young girl's skill and honesty or not, but rather inclined to do so, and admire her with all her heart.

Then Patience washed out the stains of mud, made fresh starch, and when her father and her brothers came in (fortunately rather late), she had still the ironing-blanket spread upon the table in the window, and was hard at work. John began to tease her again a little on her important business not being done yet; and Dorothy began to tremble, for she thought, now Patience is going to have her revenge; but Patience only put off John in her sweet way, and, to Dorothy's astonishment, never mentioned her.

A feeling of gratitude was at this moment kindled in Dorothy's heart towards her cousin, which long afterwards ripened into deep affection. If Patience had known it, the disappointment and vexation, which she could not help feeling just at first, would have been completely checked.

Patience had to stop for tea; but she soon began again, and by a quarter before seven she had nearly finished them. Although it was candlelight, they were no way inferior to the first; and it was with pleasure that she was ironing the last, when her mother came in.

"How is the child, mother?" were her first words.

"Very bad, my dear. I'm afraid Ann has to lose him; and, being her first, she feels it sadly. But Patience,

my dear, what is the reason that you are ironing still? you had nearly finished when I went out."

Patience looked round; there was no one in but Jemmy; John and his father being in the workshop, and Dorothy having slipped upstairs; and then she said,—

"Well, mother, you must not be angry with Dorothy, but when I had finished them she came in and held Pussy over the basket, just to frighten me, and she dropped in and dirtied them."

"A naughty, mischievous girl! So you had to do them over again, my dear child?"

"Not all of them, only a few," said Patience, with a sweet smile. "I was only sorry for Margaret, because the lady's-maid came down for them, and she was rather vexed; but we promised she should have them again by seven o'clock; and Jemmy says he will take them, and that will save Margaret nicely. Now, mother, I want you to look at them to see if they are right; I was so afraid they would have to go without your seeing them."

Dorothy had crept back into the room whilst Patience was talking to her mother; but her entrance was unheeded. Keziah bent down to kiss her kind forgiving daughter; and, in praising her work and her forbearance, she had no thought of Dorothy.

But when Jemmy had taken up the basket, and set out, promising to stop and tell Margaret on the way, his mother remembered the offender, and turned round to speak severely to her. But again Patience interceded: "She had no one to teach her better," she whispered; and though Mrs. Jackson would not be stopped from reproving, she promised that she would not

tell her uncle about it; and Dorothy was so grateful, that she behaved very well for some time afterwards.

About this time a change took place in Jemmy's prospects, which gave them all great pleasure. He had now arrived at an age when it was necessary to fix upon some trade for him, and his father was thinking a good deal upon the subject. Indeed Jemmy was past the age when boys are generally apprenticed; but he was so studious and so fond of learning, that his father had been loth to remove him from the school.

Now, however, it was decided that he must leave, and several trades had been proposed for him, when one evening their good clergyman, Mr. Johnson, called, and, after some other conversation, inquired what they were going to do with Jemmy. They explained to him all their wishes and intentions, and then he told them that he had come to offer to make him a pupil-teacher, if his father would allow him to remain longer at the school. He spoke very highly of Jemmy's conduct and abilities, and said that it was the master's wish to keep him, and that he had no doubt that he would take great pains with him, and make him quite fit, in two or three years, to take a schoolmaster's place himself. "In fact," said Mr. Johnson, "there is some talk of building a school in a distant part of my parish, where a careful master would be a blessing; and if Jemmy's future conduct is what it promises to be, I should have no hesitation in placing him there."

Jemmy's eyes sparkled; there was no need to ask him how he liked the plan. Patience at least knew that it was the second best situation he should like to have in the world. As for his parents, they were well contented

with the prospect, and very grateful to Mr. Johnson. Jemmy's health had never been strong, and one of their difficulties had been to find a trade that he would be active enough for; and, with many thanks, they gladly agreed to leave him at the school.

Before he went away, Mr. Johnson added that Jemmy's behaviour had always been what he should have expected from his bringing up. "It is not difficult," he said, "for us to distinguish in the school those children who have honest God-fearing parents. With these, our work is well begun, if not already half accomplished, for us."

And many years afterwards Mr. Johnson's words were a comforting remembrance to Jemmy's father and mother.

CHAPTER IV.

"There's a tongue in every leaf,
A voice in every rill;
A voice that speaketh everywhere,
In flood and fire, through earth and air!
A tongue that's never still!"

"O Lord! how good Thou art!"—MISS BOWLES.

JEMMY had been established for several months in his new position as assistant schoolmaster, when the month of May came round again. On the Queen's birthday, which was of course a holiday, he had promised to take the girls for a long ramble through the woods, chiefly on Dorothy's account; for she had always before lived in a large town, and her ignorance about birds and flowers, and the other beauteous gifts of nature, in which Jemmy and Patience so much delighted, had often astonished them. They were talking about the excursion on the night before, and John said, making a dismal face in jest,—

"I should like to go with you, but I never have a holiday."

"Well, John, you shall have one to-morrow, then," said his father, who overheard them. "I'll give you to-morrow afternoon to do as you like with; I'll trust you to get into no mischief."

"That you may depend upon, father," said John; "and I thank you kindly. I don't quite like the idea, though, of taking holiday when you are working hard."

"Never mind that, John," replied his father; "I shall

perhaps take something like a holiday myself. I hear that they are going to make a new shop in High-street, and I am thinking of sending in an estimate for the wood-work. So I shall walk over after dinner and look at the place."

"And I want some calico and some things for these girls," said his wife; "so suppose I take a holiday too, and walk over with you, Abraham—and we will shut up house to-morrow afternoon."

That none should be left out in the enjoyment of the holiday, pleased them all, and they chatted about their different plans all the evening.

Next morning Dorothy and Patience got up with the lark, and eagerly looked out of the window to see if it was fine. The sun was already shining bright and warm, and the swallows were twittering at their work under the house-eaves; so there were no fears about the weather.

Full of spirits and activity, they made the fire, cleaned the kitchen, and had breakfast ready before the mother was up; and very soon after they had done breakfast, they were anxious to set off. But Keziah advised them not to be in a hurry, as there would be day enough to tire them if they did not set off for an hour or two.

Besides, Jemmy could not go with them yet, for he had some business with the master; and whilst they were waiting for him, Patience thought that it would be very nice to ask Mary Burrel to go with them. This was a schoolfellow, who was a great favourite with both Dorothy and Patience. She had no mother; her father was a soldier, and absent with his regiment, so she lived with an old grandmother, who was very cross to her and grudged her every pleasure and indulgence.

Most girls would have been afraid of going to ask Mrs. Burrel to let Mary go out for the day, or even for an hour's play at battledore and shuttlecock, or a walk on a fine spring afternoon; but the old woman had a fancy for Patience in her rough way; so, without any fear, she went with her petition. After some coaxing, Mrs. Burrel said,—

“Well, it's all nonsense; she'll tear her clothes, and get no good by it; but she may go this once, if she likes.”

Mary was much pleased even with this ungracious leave; and after she had got in some water, made up the fire, and done what she could to prevent her grandmother from missing her during the day, she went back with Patience to call for Jemmy and Dorothy, and for the basket of provisions which their mother had got ready for them.

John was to follow them by a shorter road; and they fixed where to meet him at dinner-time; and then, with many a laugh and merry speech, the young people set off on their excursion.

Their mother watched them with fond eyes, as they walked down the road. There was Dorothy, now grown a tall straight girl, with bright, laughing black eyes, and as a contrast to her, the pale, gentle-looking Mary Burrel, following with unusually happy steps; and then came her own sweet Patience, looking so nice in the clean lilac cotton dress and cape, and the close straw bonnet with its fresh white ribbons; and close to her as usual came the pride of his mother's heart, her Jemmy, grown a tall, thin fellow, with curling brown hair and a heavenly countenance, as she thought, when he turned

round to smile and wave his cap to her before they turned the corner. "God is good to me!" said the mother, as she turned back into her house.

Meanwhile the children went into the pasture, which was now one gay carpet of buttercups and daisies. "You may see that it is full spring-time" said Jemmy, "for even your little foot, Patience, can cover nine daisies."

They were all children to-day, and must try this experiment, though Patience said it was a shame to trample down the pretty flowers on purpose; and having thus satisfied themselves that spring had really come, they went on by the river-side, crossed the stile, and through another field, into a long green lane. Here the bank on each side was covered with sweet, pale primroses, dark blue violets, and the delicate flowers of the wood-sorrel, that fragile, small white bell, streaked with lilac, that hangs drooping on its thread-like stalk, as if a breath would make it "die away."

Dorothy, a town-bred girl, had scarcely ever picked wild flowers until this spring, and she ran up to the flowery bank delighted, and would fain have stopped to gather a good handful; but Jemmy said, "We had better go on now; if we wait to pick all the flowers we see, we shall never get to the grey rocks by the time John comes. We shall find prettier flowers in the wood; so come along now, girls."

So on they went until, turning a corner of the lane, they came upon a gipsies' camp. There were not many gipsies in it; probably the men, and some of the women also, were out on foraging expeditions, or gone into the town to sell their small wares; only some lads

and children were to be seen about, and an old woman wrapped in a scarlet cloak, who was sitting with a pipe in her mouth at the entrance of the tent. Just before her was a bright wood fire, with a large iron pot hung over it, supported by three thick sticks, and most likely filled with soup for the gipsies' dinner.

As soon as our party came in sight, they were startled by a huge bull-dog coming towards them barking furiously. Patience trembled, Dorothy looked inclined to drive it back, and Mary Burrel screamed. Jemmy, placing himself between it and the girls, tried to drive it away with his stick, when a swarthy lad, who had been taking a donkey out of a cart at the time the dog sprang out, and now stood watching the affray, cried out, "You had best not touch my dog, or I'll let you know why; you ——" calling him a bad name.

Jemmy answered in a firm but civil tone, "If he is your dog, please call him off; don't you see that he is frightening these girls?"

"Poor chicken-hearted things," said the gipsy boy in a mocking tone; "at 'em, Jowler—seize 'em."

Jowler obeyed by flying on Dorothy in a great rage, when Jemmy let his thick stick fall upon him with such good will that the dog ran away howling miserably.

His master was now in a great passion, and using very wicked language, was rushing upon Jemmy, when the old woman at the tent, who had been observing them all the time, took the pipe out of her mouth, and rising in a dignified manner, held up her withered hand and said, "Leave the lad alone, Gaspar, I command you. If you touch a hair of his head it will be worse for you when the men come back. That white-faced loon has twice

the pluck of a bully like you, who would set your brute on three small girls. Go back to your cord-twisting, and let me see your ill-favoured face no more to-day."

The lad's swarthy features grew darker with rage and unsatisfied revenge; but he dared not disobey the old woman, who was the gipsy queen, and reigned over her tribe with supreme authority; and he slunk back to a place behind the tent, where some other boys were busy in the employment she alluded to.

Jemmy, with the girls still trembling, walked on quickly. As they passed the old woman, Jemmy raised his cap and said, "Thank you kindly, mistress; I am glad it has not come to a fight; but if it had, I would have shown him that I was not so chicken-hearted as he thought me."

"Nay, nay," replied the gipsy, "ye have a brave heart in your thin body; but ye must have come to the worst with Gaspar; he is twice as strong as ye are, and would have thought little of murder when the fury was on him; so go your way with your blue-eyed sister there,—she is as frightened as the dark one and the other, though she keeps it in so well."

In truth they were all frightened, and did not breathe freely until they had got to the end of the lane, and had passed through a gate into a pretty field by the river-side again. After crossing this field, they reached the entrance of the wood. Here it was more like what used to be called a forest in olden times, only not so extensive—a bit of open ground, then a clump of high trees, then some green sward again, and here and there a close thicket of underwood, forming a shelter for foxes, hares, and many kinds of smaller animals. Various birds, too,

peopled the higher trees, and filled the air with their delicious songs.

Listen to that thrush," said Jemmy, as they sat to rest on the trunk of a fallen tree; "is it not wonderful that a small bird like that can send forth such a flood of song?"

"But look, Jemmy," said Dorothy, "at yon little bird. It seemed to spring up from that thick tuft of grass, and it is flying higher and higher, and chirping all the time."

"That is a lark," replied Jemmy. "'Hark, hark, the lark at heaven's gate sings,' as Shakspeare, the great poet, says. I love to watch the larks. They always seem to me like messengers from earth to heaven."

"What strange things you do say, Jemmy," said Dorothy. "Let us pick some flowers. That will be better than talking. Come, Mary." And the two ran off together.

"Do you remember, Patience," said Jemmy, after the two had left them; "do you remember my once wishing I was a bird, when I was vexed and tired? I have often thought how wrong it was—how unfit I must have been to go to heaven, when I was so discontented upon earth."

"I remember it very well," said Patience, putting her hand in his,—she loved to hear Jemmy talk.

"I often think," continued he, "how wicked we are to repine at trifles, when the love of God is shed abroad on the sinful earth as we see it on this bright May day. Look at the world, how beautiful it is! The blue hills in the distance, the pointed spire of our church just rising above the trees in our pasture, Patience; the river winding like a silver thread in the sunshine; up there the rich

green woods, and here before us smooth green grass, studded with bright flowers—the birds singing, and everything so joyful. One might think it was the garden of Eden again, and sin and misery unknown. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise His holy name!”

Patience pressed the hand she held, to show she felt the same; but she did not speak, and they sat in happy silence for some time. Then Jemmy started up, and said,—

“I must get you some flowers, Patience; suppose I make you a crown of that pretty blue bird’s-eye, as we used to call it; but its proper name, ‘forget-me-not,’ is prettier. Is it not a nice name? you shall have a wreath of them, and they will say to you, ‘Forget me not.’”

“And I will get mother a large posy,” said Patience, as they stood amidst a profusion of gay flowers. Under the hazel bushes were tufts of large primroses, encircled by their long green leaves; there were large beds of the pretty flower that Jemmy went to gather, and of the hyacinth; there were bright orchises, rosy vetches, and elusters of deep-blue dog-violets.

Patience thought she should never be tired of gathering them; and thinking how pleasant it would be for her mother to see them before her in the kitchen window when she was at her ironing, she got her hands full, very nicely arranged, with graceful little ferns hanging down all round.

When she held them out for Jemmy to admire, he pulled a bit of string out of his pocket, and, putting some dock leaves round to keep them cool, he tied them tightly up, to make them easier for her to carry.

Then they sat down again to make the crown.



Patience and Jemmy gather flowers in the Wood.

Patience held one end, whilst Jemmy made it of "forget-me-nots," binding them with soft long grass. When it was finished, he said,—

"Now I will crown you; or shall I wait till John comes?—I wonder where Dorothy and Mary are."

As he spoke, he saw Mary Burrel coming towards them alone, and looking rather sad.

"What is the matter, and where is Dorothy?" they both exclaimed at once, for they feared some accident had happened to her.

"She's coming," said Mary, rather in a cross tone.

"Where are your flowers?" asked Patience. "Have you got none all this time?"

"I did get plenty," replied Mary, "but they are far enough now."

"How is that," said Jemmy; "has somebody been robbing you? Sit down here and tell us all about it."

"We went up there," said Mary, pointing to the wood, "and I got a lot of flowers, as many as I could hold in both my hands, and I was just going on to pull a pretty bird's-eye that I saw, when Dorothy, who had been saying I got the best all the time, and abusing me for it, ran past me, and gave me a great push, and I fell down a piece of rock; and I lost my posy, it went quite out of sight, and I tore my frock—look here." And as Mary showed a great rent in her skirt, and thought of her grandmother's anger, she burst into fresh tears.

Jemmy and Patience tried to comfort her. "When we get home," said Patience, "I'll mend your frock, and,"—here she cast a loving glance at her flowers,—and I will give you my posy instead of the one you have lost; so don't cry, Mary, dear,—here, take it."

"No, no, Patience," cried Jemmy, "that is for mother; she will like best what you have picked for her, so keep that, and I will get Mary another."

And off ran the good-natured lad to gather flowers to comfort their young companion, whose tears, however, soon stopped, as she told Patience about the pretty things she had seen in the wood: the new flowers, the tame birds, and a nest with five little blue eggs in it. Dorothy had wanted to take this nest, and Mary had stopped her,—this had been the first cause of their disagreement.

Mary was chatting thus, when Dorothy made her appearance, looking rather sulky; she did not speak to them, but sat down at a little distance, and began to make up her flowers into a neat bunch.

Presently Jemmy came with a nosegay that rivalled that of Patience, and made Mary's eyes sparkle with pleasure. As she was admiring it, he said,—

"Both the sun and my appetite tell me it is dinner-time. Let us be going to the grey rocks, or John will be there before us."

He turned to lead the way, and seeing his cousin, added, "What, Dorothy, are you there? How came you to be so unkind to Mary?"

"I wasn't unkind to her," said Dorothy, very crossly. "She's an ill-natured thing; she wanted to get all the flowers."

"I didn't, Dorothy," said Mary, looking ready to cry again.

"Well, never mind now," interposed Jemmy, good-humouredly, "you forget what big girls you both are growing; let us all be friends to-day. I have got Mary

some more flowers, so you must both 'forgive and forget,' and follow your leader to the grey rocks."

It was not easy to resist Jemmy's hearty pleasant manner, and Dorothy's frowns were a little dispersed as she followed with the rest.

It was a pretty meeting-place that they had fixed upon. A green plain, sloping a little from the wood down to the river, scattered over with grey moss-grown rocks of different shapes and sizes, some shaded with trees, or surrounded by brushwood; while similar grey stones, forming a natural bridge, ran across the river.

Just as the children came out of a little wood, through which they had to cross into this plain, they spied a figure at the other side of the stream. This figure they all agreed was John, and they stood to watch him as he skipped actively from one to another of the stepping-stones, until he reached his friends, by whom he was received with joy.

"Was it not lucky, John," cried Patience, "that we just came down in time to meet you?—and so none of us have had to wait. Look, what beautiful posies we have got!"

"Very pretty, indeed!" said John, scarcely giving them a glance; "but I am so hungry, I had rather see a bit of bread. Where is our dinner, little woman?"

"There it is," said Patience, "pointing to the basket on one of the rocks; "Jemmy has carried it all the way; I will have all ready for you in a minute. Come, Dorothy and Mary, now which shall be our table?" and they went for the basket, which was at some little distance.

"This is a nice place," said Mary, stopping. "There is

no table, but here are two flat rocks opposite each other, with just room for our knees between."

"There is a far nicer place down yonder, by the river," said Dorothy, glad of an opportunity of contradicting her quondam friend.

"But there is a shady tree here," said Mary, "and it is such a pretty place."

"I am sure it's not," said Dorothy, getting angry.

Patience had been busy taking the things out of the basket; but hearing the loud tones, she came forward, and was angrily appealed to by both.

In her own mind she at once agreed with Mary, but did not like to say so for fear of irritating Dorothy; so she only said, "Let us leave it to the boys. I'll call them, and ask them to choose which place."

"They are sure to say Mary's," grumbled Dorothy.

"They won't know which is hers or yours either, you know," said Patience, soothingly; and she called her brothers, who were standing by the river-side, talking and making ducks and drakes with stones along the water.

They quickly came, and Patience said, "Dorothy and Mary have found two places for us to dine in."

"We can't dine in two at once, little goose," said John.

"Of course not," said Patience, laughing. "That is the very thing. We want you to choose which: that one with the large flat stone in the middle, and smaller stones for seats; or this one under the tree."

"Oh, this one, decidedly," said both the boys. "It is the nearest, besides being far prettier than the other." And they sat down, without noticing Dorothy's dark looks.

Patience served them with plates, and then brought the cold pasty, which she said John had to carve with his large knife.

"Stop a minute, John," said Jemmy, "we have not said grace."

"Well, I never thought of such a thing as grace here," replied John; "however, go on."

Jemmy took off his cap, and bowing his head reverently, asked a blessing. Patience thought it was much more solemn to be saying a prayer to God under the blue sky, here in the free open air, than at their own table at home; and she said Amen with all her heart.

They were all hungry, and enjoyed the nice dinner that the kind mother had prepared for them.

"I wish we had some water," said Jemmy; "I believe there is a little spring round that corner, if I only had something to bring it in."

"There is a mug," said Patience, producing one out of her basket. "I should never have thought of it, but mother reminded me. Mother thinks of everything."

"So she does," said Jemmy, running off to get the water.

"Stop, Jemmy," cried John; "look here!" As he spoke, John pulled out of his pocket two bottles of cider, much to the surprise of his party. "I thought we might have some trouble in getting nice fresh water, so I brought this cider; and now we will drink father and mother's health in it."

This they did heartily, passing the mug all round; and then they remembered that it was the queen's birthday, so they drank her majesty's health as well. When they had done their dinner, they put the remains into the

basket, and it struck Patience that it would be a good plan to wash the plates in the river, and carry them home nice and clean.

The other girls agreed with her; so they took them down to the river-side. There Patience tried to dip them into the water, but she wetted her frock, and could not manage it very well; so Jemmy stood upon a large stone in the river, and dipped the plates into a little quick-running stream. When one was washed clean, he handed it to Patience, to be dried on the towel that the pasty had been wrapped in.

"Let me dry them, Patience, will you?" asked Mary.

"No," cried Dorothy, who seemed determined to find something to quarrel about, "I will;" and she pushed past Mary, and held out her hand for the plate.

"I can't give it to two of you," said Jemmy, smiling. "Let Mary do them, Dorothy; she is our visitor, you know," he added, in a coaxing way.

"I don't care," cried Dorothy, passionately, "she sha'n't have it; you're always on her side, Jemmy;" and as she said this, she reached over, and snatched the plate out of Jemmy's hand with such force that he lost his balance, and fell off the rock into the water, striking with violence on a sharp stone below. He fell forwards, so that his head came close to where they were standing on the edge of the water.

Patience cried out, "Oh, Jemmy, dear!" Mary screamed, and John, who was a little way off, rushed forward, and raised him out of the water, and laid him pale and senseless on the grass. Patience, whose heart seemed to have stopped beating when she saw him fall, looked wildly round for help, but no human dwelling was near

them, and she lifted up her heart and prayed for mercy ; then kneeling down beside Jemmy, and clasping her hands together, she said,—

“ Oh, John, what shall we do ? ”

“ I don’t know, honey,” replied John, in a hoarse voice, unlike his own. “ Jemmy, dear Jemmy ! look up, man, are ye badly hurt ? ”

The well-known voice seemed to rouse the unconscious lad, and he half-opened his eyes ; an expression of pain passed over his face, and he closed them again.

“ Thank God, he lives ! ” said John, in a low, fervent voice. “ Oh ! if we had but the doctor ! ”

“ Let me run for him,” screamed Dorothy, who had been hitherto standing as if stupified. “ I’ve killed him—I’ve killed him ! ” and she sobbed and wrung her hands ; while Mary, who was crying too, said, more quietly, “ I know the short road, I could go.”

“ It would be so long before you could bring him back with you, and he might not be in,” said John. “ If we could only get him home any way. Oh, Jemmy dear ! ”—John groaned again. “ Whisht, Dorothy, wisht ; you can’t undo it now.” John said this in a gentle, grieving tone. There was no room for anger in their sorrow-laden hearts. “ The gipsies,” exclaimed Patience, speaking hastily and anxiously—“ they’re just up in that lane above—they would help us. They have a little cart ; may-be they’d let us have it. Look ! he’s coming to.”

Jemmy was opening his eyes, and the hue of returning life was dawning on his pallid cheeks. John held a drop of cider to his lips, he swallowed it, and revived ; but with consciousness came the pain again, and he groaned in agony.

"Where is it, Jemmy, dear?" said Patience, bathing his forehead with her handkerchief dipped in water. His head had not been wet, though all his clothes were dripping.

Jemmy tried to smile when he heard her voice, but it changed into a fearful spasm. In a few minutes he grew a little better, and opening his eyes, saw the pale face of his sister bending over him.

"Don't be frightened, darling," he whispered; then his eyes closed once more, and a groan escaped his lips.

Presently he opened them again, and looked anxiously round; he seemed to be thinking. Patience, John, and Mary were standing beside him; but he still looked as if in search of some one.

"What is it, dear Jemmy?" said Patience.

"Where is poor Dorothy?" gasped the unselfish sufferer, "tell her not to mind; she didn't mean to hurt me."

Dorothy had been standing behind him; but when she heard these kind, forgiving words, she rushed forward, and throwing herself down beside him, shrieked out—

"Oh, Jemmy, don't speak that way to me; it's worse than if you struck me. I wish I had been dead before I hurt you this way."

"Hush! Dorothy, don't say that," murmured Jemmy; but he could say no more, the exertion of speaking was too much for him.

"Get up, Dorothy," said John, seeing this. "If you're sorry—and I'm sure you are—keep off him and be quiet: that will be the best thing."

"Oh! John," said Jemmy, looking up wistfully at his

brother, who bent down over him, as he whispered, "Do you think ye'll ever get me home again?"

"We'll try, Jemmy, my boy," said John, trying to speak cheerfully. "I'll be off now and see for a cart, if you think you can do till I come back."

"I'd better go," said Patience; "the gipsies know me, and the old woman was very kind."

"No, no," cried Jemmy, exerting himself to speak as loudly as he could—"not Patience."

"No," said John; "you need not fear, Jemmy, I'll go myself."

"Let me go with you," said Mary, "I know the place."

"Well, come along, then," said John; and in a few minutes they were out of sight.

Patience would have almost rather gone herself. To have been moving—to have been actively doing something for the relief of her dear brother, would have been some comfort; but she said no more, and stayed beside him, soothing him with her sweet voice, and rubbing his damp limbs, to keep some warmth in them.

John and Mary found the old woman still sitting before the tent. When she heard their errand, she groaned several times, and muttered her regret that such an accident should have happened to the brave pale-face; then she got up, and calling some boys, ordered them to put the donkey in the cart at once. It was already done: they had been going to use it for some other purpose. The old woman next directed them to put a soft bed in it, and some coverings; then she and Mary got into it, and John running beside them, they drove as fast as the donkey could go down to the field where the sufferer lay, and Patience had the comfort of seeing the arrival of

this welcome aid almost before she thought John could have had time to ask for it.

Without speaking a word, the woman got out of the cart, and going up to Jemmy, examined him, to see if any bones were broken; and finding there were none, she ordered John, and the boy she had brought, to lift him upon the bed, which they had taken out, then to raise him gently on it into the cart, and wrap him in the coverings. The motion hurt him very much, but he closed his lips, and would not suffer a groan to escape him. When he was placed in the cart, however, he fainted away again. The old woman immediately took a bottle out of her pocket, and poured some of its contents down his throat. This revived him, and the gipsy then said, "Now he'll do. Let the blue-eyed girl get in beside him;" and John lifted Patience in.

"Now move on, Bill, slowly. He will not bear much rattling about."

The gipsy boy that she called Bill led the donkey on, and the rest of the saddened party followed. John knew a shorter way than passing by the gipsies' camp, so when they came to the turning, they parted with the old woman, John thanking her warmly for her kindness.

"Nay, nay," said she, "you owe me no thanks. I liked the pale-faced lad from the first, with his brave heart and civil tongue; but I would have done the same for you, if you had met with a like misfortune. Now, fare ye weel."

And they departed on their different ways.

CHAPTER V.

"Is that a death-bed where the Christian lies?
Yes: but not his, 'tis Death itself that dies."

COLERIDGE.

THUS a second time did a cart slowly drive up to Abraham Jackson's door, bearing a load of misery; yet how different in its character! Then it was uncontrolled and violent, selfish and inconsiderate. How unlike the quiet, suffering form, with its patient smile, and the hand affectionately locked in that of his dear sister, who was forgetting her own grief to speak words of blessed comfort to her brother.

John had the key of the house-door, and opened it, and went first into the cold deserted kitchen. There was no fire, and the sun that was gleaming through the window only made it seem more cheerless to the aching heart of poor Patience, as she followed him.

The first thing to be done was to get a bed ready for Jemmy; his own was down stairs, so he was laid in it. The gipsy boy helped John to carry him in, and to take his wet clothes off; then, wishing him well in his rough jargon, was going off, when John stopped him to offer his hearty thanks and some money for his trouble; but the boy shook his head, and said, "Nay, nay, his granny would be vexed with him if he took anything," and departed. John then ran for the doctor, whilst Patience was making all comfortable round Jemmy. Meanwhile Dorothy was lighting the kitchen fire, and

Mary had gone to her grandmother's to bring a kettle of hot water, in case Jemmy could drink some tea.

In a very short time John returned with the doctor. He was a very kind man, and spoke cheerfully to Patience. She told him how the accident had happened ; and he examined Jemmy, and shook his head as he heard how long he had remained in his damp clothes. He then gave her some directions, promised to send some medicine, and, finding that her father and mother were expected about five o'clock, he said he would call again about that time.

As he was going out, Patience followed him, and, in a choked voice, asked him if he thought Jemmy would soon get better.

"I can hardly tell you yet," he answered kindly. "He has received some severe internal injury, I am afraid ; but you must keep your spirits up, and nurse him well. Mind that he is kept perfectly quiet, and do not let any one enter his room but yourself and your brother, till his mother comes home."

In spite of the doctor's kind manner, Patience felt as if a stone had fallen on her heart as she turned away from him ; but she tried to keep back the sobs and tears that were choking her. As she passed through the kitchen, she saw that Dorothy had just finished making up a good fire, and was now kneeling beside it with the most miserable expression on her face. Patience could not help going up to her and kissing her.

"Oh, Patience, please don't!" half screamed her cousin, throwing herself on her old place, the settle, and crying as if her heart would break. "Oh, if God would only forgive me and make him better!"

"Pray to Him, dear Dorothy," said Patience; "pray for yourself and for us,—pray that we may all submit to His will, whatever it may be, and do not give way to grief—we shall need all our strength."

She was interrupted by the entrance of some neighbours, who, hearing of the accident, had come, with the ready, active kindness so often found among the poor, to offer help, and, what is often as acceptable, their sympathy.

Patience felt grateful to them, and related as calmly as she could the particulars of the accident, only omitting Dorothy's share in it; but when they wanted to go into the back room where poor Jemmy lay, she told them gently, but with firmness, that the doctor had ordered him to be kept quiet.

"Ay, ay," said Nanny Smith, "they always say that, do the doctors: as if we should do him any harm. I think I have been with as many sick folks as he has, and I only want to have a peep at the poor fellow."

"I promised the doctor," said Patience, very quietly, "that I would let no one enter the room till mother came home."

"It's not proper, child," said Mrs. Brown, "for him to be left so long without some experienced person; you don't know what might happen in that time."

Patience turned very pale, and her knees shook as she replied,—

"I am very sorry, but I gave the doctor my word."

"And so the poor lad is to be left suffering by himself?" said another woman, in loud indignant tones.

"Oh, hush, please!" said Patience imploringly. "He'll perhaps hear you. He is not by himself. John

is beside him now, and I am going by-and-by." She did not like to say "as soon as you have gone." Then she added civilly, "Thank you kindly for coming: may-be you'll step in when mother returns?"

It was not easy to resist her sweet manner; and one by one the neighbours, although much inclined to be angry at such a child setting herself up above her betters, told her to send for them if she should want any help, and left the house.

For some time Patience alternately sat beside Jemmy, and went into the kitchen to speak a word of comfort to poor Dorothy, who seemed as if she could not rest a moment. She put the kettle on, then sat down and cried, then started up to make things tidy before her uncle and aunt came home; then, as she thought of what a coming it would be, stopped to cry and sob again.

As Patience was standing beside her, she caught sight in the window, of her flowers, placed in a pot of water, with the wreath slipped over it, and lying on the window-seat. "Oh, Dorothy!" she exclaimed.

"I thought you might like to have them still, so I picked them up and brought them," replied her cousin simply.

Patience leaned her head on the table before the window, overcome by the remembrance of their past happiness, and cried bitterly.

She was roused by Jemmy's voice calling her, and checking her sorrow and wiping her eyes, she went to him, saying, as she passed her cousin, "I thank you, dear, it was very kind of you."

"Patience, dear," said Jemmy, when she was near to him, "will mother be long now, do you think?"

"They'll soon be here, I should think," said Patience; "they'll very likely be crossing the fields by this time."

"Would you mind going to meet them, then, Patience, you would do it best. And tell mother not to fret; it may not be so bad as we expect, and I am happy either way. You might go just into our pasture, Patience, then you would see them first; other people might make so much of it, and mother would be frightened."

"I'll go, Jemmy," said Patience, with her heart sinking more and more.

And she put on her bonnet again, and went into the pasture, where the birds were singing and the sun was shining just as cheerfully as when they set off in the morning. In the morning—what a long time that seemed ago! Trouble was then out of sight; not a cloud on their sky of hope, all bright sunshine and happiness! Since then what a change. And Patience dared not think of what another few hours might bring. "O Lord have mercy!" was the cry of her inmost heart; and then, as she prayed, it changed to "O Lord, make us able to bear Thy will!" Soon her father and mother appeared in sight; they crossed the stile. She started up, tried to look as usual, and went to meet them. How she longed to throw herself into her mother's arms, and weep her grief away.

"Well, Patience, lass," said her father, "so you have got home before us. I fancied you would be tired sooner than you thought."

"You look pale, child," said her mother anxiously; "has aught happened?"

"It is only——" Patience began. "Let me take this parcel for you, mother," she added hurriedly, walking

on beside them. "It's only that Jemmy fell off a little rock into the water, so we were forced to come back soon."

"He is not much hurt, is he?" said her father.

"He has been in great pain," said Patience; "but he is easier now. We thought it better to have Dr. Hope."

"Is it so bad as that?" cried her mother. "Patience, honey, you are not telling us the worst. Is he drowned?" she half screamed, stopping, and seizing Patience by the arm.

"No, no, mother," said Patience, nearly losing her composure. "Don't be frightened; Jemmy sent me on himself to you, for fear any person should meet you and make it worse than it is. He says you are not to fret, it may not be so bad as we have feared; and any way he is happy, and prays that God will comfort you."

The poor mother would hear no more; she rushed forward through the pasture, round the corner—that corner from whence he had joyfully waved his hand to her in the morning—and into the house. She passed through the kitchen without noticing Dorothy, who was now crouching in the chimney-corner, and into the back room, which her maternal instinct, despite her distracting grief, made her enter with the softest steps, and then she sunk down by his bed-side, whispering, "My poor boy!"

Jemmy, who had been exercising the greatest fortitude, gave way at once when he saw his mother, and he became insensible again. Thus his father saw him when he reached the house, and thought that he was dead; but John said, "He has only fainted, father; he was this way at first," and applied some remedies.

Jemmy soon opened his eyes; but, alas! he knew not

the dear faces that surrounded him, and his strange wild words alarmed them all. John ran for Dr. Hope again. He soon came, and said that Jemmy was in a state of fever and required the greatest care, ordered some remedies, and again recommended extreme quiet for him. All that night he remained in the same state, and it was piteous to hear his rambling. His mother would not leave him for an instant, and John stayed with her; so Patience, seeing that she was of no use there, went back to her father, who was leaning his head upon his hands, in the deepest sorrow. By her affectionate cares he was by degrees a little comforted, and as the doctor had said that there was no immediate danger, Patience at length prevailed on him to go to bed; and, in obedience to her mother's wishes, she and Dorothy crept to their little room, where, in quietness, if not in sleep, they passed that first dreary night.

It is during the time of sickness—which always seems to come upon us suddenly, whether the result of accident or disease—that the principles of even a little child shine forth.

She who in the time of ease and comfort has been accustomed to call upon the Lord, has been used to commend herself and all those dear to her to His care, thus learning daily to have faith in God through Jesus Christ, is the one who will be the most useful in the time of trouble. In the midst of her natural sorrow she does not despair, for she knows that she has a Mighty Friend who will make all things work together for her good; she has hope in God, and faith and hope bring forth charity. She does not sit down with folded hands,

and give way to selfish sorrow; but, with subdued spirit and gentle tongue, she goes about doing good. In the sick-room, tender and unwearied; out of it, active and ever thinking of the needs and bitter grief of others. Such was Patience.

Whilst the fever lasted, his mother never left poor Jemmy, lying down on the floor beside him at night, and watching him by day; and during this time it was a comfort to her to know that nothing was neglected in the house. All went on, seemingly, as usual; of the washing that came in, a few things were done by Patience, and the rest sent in to a neighbour; the meals were nicely cooked, and the house kept clean and quiet. Her father and John were obliged to go out every day to their work; their breakfast was always ready for them before they set off, and a neat little maiden was always watching for their return, with a smile on her pale, thin face, and the best news of her sick brother.

In these labours of love, Patience, for the first time, found a willing help in Dorothy, poor girl! As on the day of the accident, she seemed only to find comfort in constant activity. She went all the errands, wished to do all the cleaning, brushed the shoes and washed the clothes, and all this time never smiled, and scarcely ever spoke; but to Patience she was as obedient as if she had been her mother, attending to her slightest wish, and trying to imitate her in the gentleness of her movements—a hard lesson to one hitherto so rough and awkward.

It was only when Patience tried to caress and comfort her that she showed any of her old violence; then she always broke away, saying, "Don't, Patience, I can't

bear it. I wish I had "been dead before I brought this sorrow upon you."

The second week Jemmy seemed better, and their hopes revived when the doctor said he might be brought into the kitchen, where there was more air. His father and John made him a sort of couch, and here he lay, very weak, but tranquil and content. Sometimes he had fearful attacks of pain; then he liked Patience to sit beside him, that he might hold her hand whilst she repeated some hymns to him, or, what he liked still better, read to him St. Luke's account of the last sufferings of our Saviour. After a while the pain was more frequent, and his weakness greater; he perceived this himself, and one day he asked his mother to leave him alone for a few minutes with the doctor. She complied, and when she came back was struck with the tender gaze he fixed upon her; her heart sickened, but she made no remark. That afternoon Dorothy was at school as usual, for her aunt desired that she should go now as she used to do; and though she would have given worlds to have stayed near Jemmy, she said nothing, but went always punctually. Mrs. Jackson had gone out on an errand, and Patience was sitting by Jemmy's side, when he asked her to read to him the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to Corinthians.

Patience did so; then he asked for the seventh chapter of Revelations. When she had finished, he said,—

"Is not that beautiful, Patience; what love, what infinite love, to send us such a foretaste of the joys of heaven."

In a few minutes, he continued,—

"Is it not strange that people who have read or heard

those verses, should ever sin again—should ever do anything that would unfit them to enter that pure, blessed abode. It is the wickedness of our hearts. Oh! how wicked they are! If it were not for those sweet words, ‘washed in the blood of the Lamb,’ what hope could I have of being admitted there. But Jesus says—oh! Patience, read me the blessed promises in St. John: ‘In my Father’s house are many mansions.’”

Patience could scarcely command her voice; she was almost choking with a strange undefinable dread; but she read the chapter, and herself felt comforted.

“Yes,” said Jemmy, when she had finished, clasping his thin hands reverently—“yes, I have believed on Thy name, O Lord; take me to be where Thou art. And, Patience”—he laid his hand on her arm,—“you will come there too, in God’s own time, and bring poor Dorothy; she will need much comfort when I’m gone,—lead her to the everlasting comfort. And my dear mother. Oh! Patience, tell her not to fret; tell her afterwards how happy I am, that I would not have it different. and that she must not wish me back again.”

Patience was now bending her head over Jemmy’s hand, and the tears that she could not stop were falling over it; at last she said,—

“You may get better, Jemmy.”

But he shook his head, and said,—

“No, no, Patience; I asked the doctor this morning to tell me the truth, and he says that it will not be more than a week or two now, so I should like father and mother and John to know, that they may be prepared.”

They did know it soon; they knew that the tender brother, the darling son, the peace-maker, the counsellor,

the example, was to be taken from them ; and it required all the self-control and faith in God that they possessed to enable them to endure the blow with patience, and to hide their grief from him.

Jemmy had been moved back to his bed that night before Dorothy learnt that the end was near. They told her gently, but her grief was dreadful, as she threw herself down before her aunt and uncle, and confessed that she was his murderer, and called on them to hate her, to kill her if they would ; for, as she exclaimed, bitterly, " You took me an orphan under your roof, you cared for me, and made me like one of your own,—and see the trouble that I have brought upon you. I wish that I had not been born, or that I had died with my own father and mother in the fever."

Abraham and his wife were much shocked ; they had never inquired minutely into the particulars of the accident, and being told that Jemmy had lost his footing and slipped off the rock, they had no suspicion that their niece had had anything to do with it ; they had, indeed, seen how changed she was, but, amidst the general misery, had made no remark upon it.

For some time they were silent ; at last Abraham spoke to the wretched girl, who still lay at their feet. " Poor child," he said, compassionately, " the sorrow that thy evil passion has caused is punishment enough. May God forgive thee, as I do now ;" and he laid his hand on the head bent low in grief before him. The mother could not speak, but she held out her hand ; Dorothy took it in her own, kissed it eagerly, then slowly rose, and went to bed.

Jemmy lingered some time longer, getting weaker and

weaker in body, but more cheerful, more like the angels in his spirit. Always patient, thankful for any little service, speaking words of comfort and heavenly hope to those around him, or listening to those read to him out of the Book of comfort. Mr. Johnson, his constant friend, often came to see him, and his visits always left Jemmy deeply thankful for the means of grace that had always been afforded him. He often talked to Dorothy, showing her that she must fear God's anger, not that of man, and begging her not to give way to fruitless remorse, but to show forth her penitence in a change of life; and as he observed her constant efforts to do right, to restrain the angry word, to be kind to all, to deny herself, and to be holy, Jemmy smiled, and prayed that she might be strengthened.

The end came at last, and Jemmy was prepared. He died tranquilly, as he had lived, and with the name of the Saviour, whom he had always loved and trusted, on his lips.

And his parents laid him in the quiet grave, and then returned to their home and their daily duties, saddened by the remembrance of the lost one, but comforted by the thought that it was only for a time, that soon they should rejoin him in that blessed abode where the lost shall be found again. And John, sadly missing the brother who had been so much to him, experienced for the first time that all on earth is vanity. And Patience walked with Dorothy in the pasture, and told her of the many happy hours that she and Jemmy had spent there together; and when she went home, she hung up the wreath, now dry and withered, in her little room; and though she did not need that to remind her of her

brother, yet when she looked at it, she thought of his goodness, his humility, and his faith in Christ, and she remembered that day so full of misery, and yet of happiness, when Jemmy said,—

“ You shall have a wreath of them, and they will say to you, ‘ Forget me not.’ ”

Robert Eyre.

CHAPTER I.

“Was not our Lord a little child,
Taught by degrees to pray?
By father dear, and mother mild,
Instructed day by day?”—KEBLE.

THE Eyres were a hardworking, respectable family, in the town of D——. James, the father, was a watch-maker. He kept a little shop in a by-street of the town, but he had no great stock in it; only a few second-hand watches hung up in the window, and an old clock or two in the shop, that had, perhaps, come in to be regulated or mended. But James had the care of the large town-clock, and he besides kept in order most of the timepieces in the town and neighbourhood, so that altogether, being a sober man, he was able to make an honest livelihood, and keep his family respectable.

And a large family there was to keep. First came Mary, she was older by four or five years than the next, for two little girls had died between her and Robert, the eldest boy, and she was growing up quite a young woman when he was only about twelve years old. Next to Robert came Sandy and Ellen, the twins; and then there was Jamie, quite a little boy; and Annie, who could hardly walk; and the baby Flora, so called after her

grandmother in Scotland. Truly Mrs. Eyre had her hands full with so many little ones; and if it had not been for Mary, I do not know how she would have managed. But Mary was a girl to be depended on; her father and mother trusted her entirely; and the children thought Mary was as able, as they knew she was willing, to do anything for them; and yet the first thing a stranger would have said on seeing her, would have been, "What a modest-looking girl!" for if ever there was a humble, simple-minded creature, I think it was Mary Eyre. She was pretty and pleasant-looking; she had brown hair, well-brushed and smooth; her dress was always neat and clean, and she never moved about in a hurry. Her voice was soft, and her manners quiet; but there was always a smile ready upon her lips, and I never saw her look unhappy. Do you know the reason why? If not, I will tell you.

When Mary was about twelve years old, there was a fever in the town of D——, and Mary and her two next sisters took it. The sisters died, poor little things! as we have said; Mary recovered, but she seemed still rather weakly; and her father, seeing this, sent her to stay with a sister of his, who lived at a small farm-house in the country, about thirty miles from D——. It was a pleasant change for her, from the little house in John Street, where everybody had looked so sorrowful lately, and where she missed her little playfellows all day long, to the cheerful farm-house, where the air was so fresh and pure, and where you could see the open country, with the high blue sky above it, for many miles around.

It was true that she had no playfellows here, for her

aunt and uncle had no children, and they lived almost two miles from the nearest village, and five miles from a town; but Mary thought it was all the nicer, for there were cows to milk, calves to serve, poultry to feed, and the garden to keep clear of weeds; besides the household work—the dusting and the cleaning, the making of beds, and the getting ready dinner for her uncle and the men when they came in from work at twelve o'clock. It was a busy place, and there was no lack of employment for anybody; and it was not very long before Mary's little pair of hands were in active requisition.

At first, indeed, she was so delicate from her illness, that she could do nothing at all. When she left home she had not been strong enough to run down the stone steps that led from the rooms over the shop, in which they lived, into the street; and for the first few days in the country she could only sit in an arm-chair, by the fire-side, and watch her aunt making up the huge bowl of brown-bread dough into the great loaves that had to be baked in the brick oven, or, perhaps, she could creep as far as the kitchen-door, and stand in the yard to watch the bantams peck about, and to breathe the strengthening air.

But a few days made a great change in Mary. Her aunt was very kind to her, and gave her plenty of new milk, and nourishing food; and, when it was warm enough, took her as far as the woodbine-seat in the front garden, where she could sit quietly and enjoy the flowers; and very soon the feeling of returning health began to run through Mary's limbs, her spirits rose, and before very long she could laugh and run about as merrily as ever. This was a pleasant sight to Mary's

aunt, who loved her dearly, but she loved her too well to let her live in idleness, when she was strong enough to work. And she said, "Now, Mary, my dear, nobody is idle here: come, and I will teach you how to make yourself useful."

Mary liked well enough to be useful, but, unfortunately, she had a fancy, firmly fixed in her little head, that she was such a clever child that she could do anything without teaching. There was a great deal of pride in her heart; and she had been called sharp and handy at home, and made so much of, from being the eldest, that she seemed to think she could not do wrong. Her aunt soon found this out. If she set her to wash up some dishes, and she was showing her how to do them in the best manner, Mary would say, "Oh, yes, aunt! I know how;" and would work away at them clumsily enough, rather than be taught.

She was going, one afternoon, to weed the middle bed in the front garden, and her aunt said, "Mind, Mary, that you do not pull up any of the mignonette by mistake; you will know it by the leaves; they are——"

"Oh, yes, aunt, I know!" said Mary, interrupting her, and ran off to her weeding. Her aunt, however, distrusting her knowledge, soon went after her, and found that she had already pulled up a number of little mignonette plants with the weeds. Mary was ashamed, when her aunt told her this, but she would not say she was sorry; and her aunt left her with the assurance that nothing but bitter experience would teach her her deficiencies, and a higher power than hers the beauty and necessity of humility.

One day her uncle was very busy in a field at some little distance from the farm, and he had desired that his dinner might be sent to him there, that he need not return; and, when it was ready, Mary's aunt called to the boy who followed the plough, to carry it to him.

"Let me take it, aunt," said Mary.

"You, child! why you don't know the road to the top field, where your uncle is working."

"Yes, aunt," said Mary, "indeed I do; I went with uncle there last week, and I can always find my way if I have been to a place once. Please, aunt, let me take it?"

So at last her aunt let her carry the dinner in a basin, tied up in a clean brown towel. Mary was pleased to be useful, and better pleased to have got her own way; and she set off merrily across the pasture in which her aunt's house stood. From the pasture she went into a field of young corn, and out of that into one of turnips. Here there was a road at one side, and a foot-path across the field from one corner to the other. Mary took the foot-path, and very unpleasant she found it, for there had been some rain, and it was still hanging on the young turnip-tops, and before she reached the other end she was both wet and dirty. In the next field she expected to see her uncle, but it was quite empty, so she went round it, and, finding an open gate, she passed through that into a meadow. This surprised her, for she certainly did not recollect going through a meadow with her uncle; however, there was no help for it, so she went on close to the hedge, sometimes pricking her legs with the thistles that were growing amongst the thick grass, and sometimes slipping into the ditch. Beside her, all the

way, there was a fir plantation, and she could see nothing beyond; and when she got to the other side of the meadow, and looked through a gap in the hedge, she saw, not far from her, a red brick house, that she was sure she had not seen before. Now she was lost, there was no doubt of it; and to go back and tell her aunt that she had missed her way, would be worse than anything, so she climbed over a railing and went towards the house. She had come within twenty yards of the farm-buildings, when a great mastiff flew out of the yard, and began to bark at her. She was terrified, and with a great scream, dropped the basin and ran away.

"Hollo!" cried a voice behind her, after whistling to the dog, "you need not be frightened of him; he won't bite."

Mary ventured to look round, although she was trembling all over, and she saw a lad standing by the door, and beckoning her to come back. She did so, but stopping on her road to pick up her bundle, found that the basin was broken to pieces, and the gravy of the pasty, that her aunt had made with so much care, was running out through the towel. Mary was so grieved at this that she began to cry.

"What now?" said the lad coming up to her. "What's the matter, little one?"

"The basin is broken, and uncle's dinner spoilt," sobbed Mary.

"And who is your uncle?" asked the other. "Where do you come from?"

"From Ashley's farm, down there," said Mary, pointing with her finger to the way she came; "I am going to the top field, to take uncle his dinner."

"He will be hungry by the time he gets it, I've a notion," said the lad. "Why, honey, you must have come near a mile out of the road; I suppose you've lost yourself."

Mary did not reply, but hung down her head; and the boy guessed that he was right, and said good-naturedly, "Well, come, it's no use crying about it now: it can't be helped. They shouldn't have sent a young thing like you such a crooked way. But never mind: stop a minute, and I'll set you right."

He disappeared for a minute or two, then coming back with his cap on, he told Mary to follow him, and went across the field. Then he lifted her over the rails, and led the way along a path among the trees, not speaking, but whistling in a low tone to himself. When they had crossed the plantation, they went through another meadow, and then Mary found herself once more in the turnip-field.

"This is where you missed your way; you should have turned up here," said her guide, going forward till he stopped before a gate, which he opened for her, and pointing to the other side of the field, said,—

"There's your uncle; tell him Joe Styles said he wasn't to scold you;" and shutting the gate behind her, he was gone before Mary had time to thank him.

When Mary's uncle saw the little girl making her way across the field to him, he called out,—

"Heyday! where is my dinner? has anything gone wrong at home?"

"I turned to the right in the turnip-field," said Mary, looking very woe-begone, "and I got to a house, and Joe Styles brought me back again."

"You turned to the wrong, I should think," said her uncle, smiling. "Come, there is no need to cry. Let me have my dinner."

"But it is broken," said Mary, now crying in earnest. "The dog frightened me, and I let it fall."

"So it is, I see," said her uncle, untying the handkerchief. "This is a bad business. I am afraid that aunt will be in a sad way about it. I believe I shall have to go back with you. Have you had your dinner?"

"No," said Mary, dismally. "I don't want any."

"Nonsense," said her uncle, "don't be miserable because you've met with an accident. Take better care next time, that is the way. You shall have a piece of this. No, I scarcely think it safe. You might be choked with a bit of broken basin, and that would be worse than having no dinner at all, wouldn't it? We will just go home, and ask aunt if she has got some bread and cheese to give us, and I will finish out my day with chopping those sticks in the corner of the yard, and you shall tie them up into little fagots, if you like; I know your aunt wants them." And as he talked in this way, the kind uncle gathered up the remnants of the basin and the pasty in the cloth, put on his coat, and then he took Mary by the hand and led her home, and she was quite surprised to see how much shorter a time it took to go by the right way.

When they arrived at the farm, Mary found her aunt in such a state of alarm about her long absence, that she had put on her bonnet—an unusual thing for her to do on a weekday—and was going out in search of her. Her uncle kindly told the tale, and finished by saying, "You

must not mind the basin, wife, for she has been in a deal of trouble about it."

"I do not mind the basin," replied his wife, looking very grave, "nor even your day's work being broken up, so much as I do Mary's own self-conceit. She fancies she knows everything; she is above being taught; and it will be well if her pride never leads her further astray than it has done to-day."

Mary was almost convinced that she had done wrong, and the next time she was going to say, "I know, aunt," she checked herself; but still she thought, "I do know how to do this, only aunt would think I was proud if I said so." There was still the pride at heart in the little girl, and that was one thing that she certainly did not know.

But Mary learnt many useful things whilst she was at Ashley's farm, and in time she learnt that too. Although it was two miles to church, her aunt and uncle never missed being there both morning and afternoon. In bad weather they used to carry something with them, and eat it at a neighbour's, and come home in the evening to a substantial tea, and Mary used to like those Sunday evenings almost more than any other evening.

Her aunt used to seem kinder than ever; she was not busy, but had always plenty of time to talk to her; and, after tea, she used to hear Mary say the Catechism; and then her uncle lifted down for her the great Bible, with pictures in. Out of this Bible Mary used to read the history of Joseph, or of David, or the wonderful journeys of the children of Israel from Egypt, where they had been poor slaves, to the land of Canaan, the rich and fruitful country which was to be their own.

Then her aunt would turn to the New Testament, and she herself would read to Mary about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, as it is written in the Gospels; and then she used to talk to Mary about the exceeding Love of our Lord in coming down from heaven to shed His blood on earth for us, that we might be saved by it. And Mary used to feel in her heart, "But I am not worthy of such love; I have been so often a naughty girl." But then her aunt read again, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" and that it is not God's will that one little one should perish.

And Mary's mind used to dwell upon it through the week; and when she was out in the fields, she used to look up at the blue sky and the silvery clouds, and think of the good God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and then she remembered how often in one day she did wrong things, until her heart was humbled, and she knew that she was proud and sinful. And when she read of the Lord Jesus to herself, how He, the King and Lord of all, took upon Himself the form of a child, became a servant, poor, "despised, and rejected of men," meek, patient, suffering, for us, that He might become our example—then again Mary's heart was humbled, and she prayed that her pride might be taken away, and that she might become in humility and truth a child of God.

And by degrees, by slow degrees, Mary became clothed with this humility—not in a week, nor in a month, nor in a year. Pride is the most stubborn enemy that a child can have to fight against, and it is often the work of a lifetime to subdue it.

Remember that, dear children. It peeps out in so

many ways. In the vain, conceited word, in the fiery reply, the obstinate determination, the unwillingness to confess that you are wrong. It shows itself in the dislike to obey your parents, to go on an errand, to do a kindness, as much as in despising any one you think of lower birth or station. This is a fierce enemy to be struggled with, to be fought against, to be conquered. And yet it must be, dear children, if you are really Christians. Do not forget that you have been soldiers since your baptism, soldiers of Christ; and it only remains for you to take up the weapons provided for you, the "Sword of the Spirit," the shield of faith, and the whole armour of God (Eph. vi.), and then to go forth manfully, fearing not, because, weak as you are yourselves, you cannot fail to conquer, if you keep near to the Captain of your salvation. He will give you the victory, and He will lead you to the Promised Land. Then, and not till then, you may lay down your arms.

But to return to Mary Eyre. She stayed a long time at the farm, for, when her aunt saw that she was improving so much both in mind and body, that she was every day learning something useful, and overcoming something evil, she was very loth to send her back to the turmoil of a numerous family, before her good principles were more fixed; and she went over to D—— and persuaded her brother to let Mary stay with her the year out. At the end of that time another child was added to the family at D——, and her mother could no longer spare the daughter, who might be such a help to her; and her aunt saw that it would no longer be right to keep her away from her parents.

As to Mary herself, she was sorry to leave the farm,

with all its pleasant occupations and its peaceful comforts, and to lose sight of the aunt and uncle who had been so truly kind to her; but she longed to see her dear father and mother again, and the children, who would be so changed now, and especially the baby; and, with mixed feelings, she prepared to go to them.

As a parting token, her uncle gave her a bright gold sovereign to keep for anything she might want to buy, he said; and her aunt let her take the pet canary and a bright geranium that she had nursed up herself, and she gave her a workbox too; and they both told her that she must come often, when she could be spared, to be freshened up with country air.

“And now Mary, my dear,” said her aunt, “you are getting on in your fourteenth year, and you can no longer be called a child; you are the eldest of your family, and you will be looked up to as an example and a help by all the little ones. You will have much to do if you mind your duty, and you may be a blessing in the house. But never forget to guard against pride; don’t think yourself better than other people; don’t be puffed up. You know where to look to cure you of that. Read about the holiness of your Saviour every day. Don’t neglect your church and your prayers, and may God bless and keep you.”

Mary went home to her parents and the children, and found indeed that there was plenty for her to do. She set herself to do it with all her might, and soon became an important member of the household; but, keeping her aunt’s parting words in mind, she grew more good and humble every day. By her own desire, soon afterwards she was confirmed; and thus strengthened, she

had gone forth upon her Christian course, unmoved, amidst the most tedious toils and troubles; for her part was chosen, and it was the better part which could not be taken from her; and so it was that Mary's smile was always ready, and that she never looked unhappy. You will not understand me fully unless you, too, have chosen the same part yourself.

CHAPTER II.

“Then still more sullen grew, and still more proud,
Fame so refused, he to himself allowed.”—CRABBE.

I HAVE told you a great deal about Mary Eyre, more than I meant to do, but she was such a pleasant companion. In the field, would you not pass by the flaunting poppy, and stoop to pick the lowly, bright-eyed daisy? Is not the violet, almost buried in its leaves, sweeter than the stiff, unshadowed tulip? So sweet, then, is humility, that we would fain linger by her side. But now I want you to go with me to the school where Robert, Mary's brother, is playing with his schoolfellows. Robert, I told you, was the eldest boy; and a fine boy he was, too,—tall for his age,—for he was not yet thirteen,—with a bright face, intelligent eyes, and dark curly hair. His mother might well be proud of his appearance, and his father might be pardoned for saying, “Our boy will be a credit to us some day.” Unfortunately, Robert quite agreed with these opinions; indeed, he went a little further in self-approbation,—and perhaps the saddest cloud that ever came on Mary's face was when she heard her favourite brother boasting of what he could do better than any one else, as he thought.

Well, Robert went to a large school just outside the town. It was an excellent school, under a good master, and managed by a visiting committee. And there were many boys there of higher station than our hero, for the

education was so good as to be desired by many people for their sons. The school-house was a large new building, surrounded by a good playground, and in this a number of the boys were playing at foot-ball.

Robert was the leader of one side, and a boy named Gregson of the other. This boy was taller than Robert, but not so pleasant-looking; he was, however, a good leader at foot-ball, and the game was a very close one. After a tough struggle, Gregson's side were victorious, and a shout of triumph rose from them of course. A dark cloud came over Robert's face; he could not bear being beaten, least of all by Gregson, who seemed to be his rival in everything. As soon as the boys saw that he had lost his temper, many of them, with the mischief that is inherent in many school-boys, began to tease him.

"I thought Bob was never beat," cried one.

"I say, Bob, man, the feather's taken out of your cap to-day," said another.

If Robert had been sensible, he would have joined in the laugh against himself; but he only got angry, and replied so crossly that he provoked the wit of his teasers, until a fierce war of words went on, which was only stopped when Gregson said, "I'll fight it out at fives, if you like, Bob."

"Well," said Robert, recovering somewhat his good humour, "I don't care if I do give you a licking there;" and they adjourned to the fives-court, where among many spectators they had their game. Robert hit the balls with an air that said, "Here I cannot fail;" but fortune was unkind to him a second time, and Gregson won again.

"It's all luck," said Robert, turning away in a rage.

"Of course, if you lose," said a tormentor; "skill, if you win."

"Say what you like, Jackson," answered Robert, "you know very well there is not a lad in the school can beat me at fives, if the luck does not run against me."

"Or at foot-ball either," returned the other, scoffingly.

"Well," said Robert, "I can tell you, the town-club would take me at any time, if it were not for my age. Jem Taylor says that I have both length of wind and of body for the game."

"And which of his dirty errands did Jem want you to run for him, when he flattered you up so?" said Jackson.

"I don't go anybody's dirty errands for them," said Robert, the more fiercely, because he knew that Jem had really engaged him in something that he would not have liked them at home to know anything about.

A fight between these two was only prevented by the opportune ringing of the bell for afternoon school. Here, at least, Robert was just now in the ascendant. He was top of his class; Gregson was only second. There was a constant strife between them; and Robert, though not much inclined to work steadily, generally attended to his lessons pretty well, merely for the purpose of preventing Gregson from getting above him.

This afternoon was an eventful one, for at the end of it they were told by their master that at Christmas there was to be a public examination, for a sort of exhibition, which would be open to the first two classes, and would entitle the successful candidates to remain three years more at this school free of expense, besides other advantages, which would be much desired by parents with limited means.

All the boys in their class looked at Robert Eyre and Gregson, while these two exchanged a glance which plainly said, "You shan't have it, that I am determined on;" and then Robert went home to tell his father what he was to expect at Christmas.

This was just what James Eyre had been looking forward to, to help him to keep Robert at school, that he might be a schoolmaster or a lawyer's-clerk; for the lad had no turn for mechanics, and could not bear the idea, as he said, of going about all day to mend people's old clocks and watches, so Sandy was to be the one brought up to his father's trade.

"You *must* get it, my boy," said his father, when he had heard the news, "it is just what I have been wishing for you."

"I can't help succeeding, father," said Robert; "there is not a lad in the class worth anything, except that sneak Gregson, and I should think I could manage to beat him."

The lad spoke in such a vaunting manner, that Mary looked up and said, "Well, do your best, Bob. It will be a famous thing if you get it, and I should think no pains will be lost that you take in preparing for your examination; it will all tell."

"You know nothing about these things, Mary," said Robert testily; "you need not fear about my getting it, I can tell you, without taking all the pains you talk of."

Now a real, earnest determination to attain a good object is an excellent thing, when it makes people take the proper means to obtain it; but with Robert it was not the case; he relied on his quickness in answering, and on his supposed cleverness, and, having declared that

he could get it without any extra pains, he would not be seen to take any. He had always been fonder of play than any thing, and now, if his father gave him a hint to mind his lessons, he only slipped out to his companions, and would take no notice of the pens and ink and paper that Mary had quietly laid ready for him in the shop, where he was supposed to be doing his tasks.

His master allowed no idleness in school-hours, so that he contrived there to pick up enough to keep him well up in his class, though he was often in disgrace for both carelessness and impertinence. One bad thing leads to another; a quiet walk with Mary on a Sunday afternoon used to be one of his greatest pleasures, but this he almost always shirked now; and by the time the twenty-third of December came, his watchful sister had begun to be very uneasy about him. I do not think Robert felt any uneasiness himself as he walked into the classroom on that eventful morning. Most of the boys were already assembled there, dressed in their Sunday clothes to do honour to the occasion; but few of them looked as well or as confident as Robert Eyre. A close observer, indeed, might not have liked the saucy toss of his head, or the wilful expression of his eye; but he was certainly a handsome fellow, as Mary had thought, with a sigh, when she was ironing him his clean stiff collar.

At ten o'clock the committee took their seats, and the gentleman who was to examine the boys arrived. The first questions had to be answered in writing. They were difficult, and Robert did not understand many of them; however, he made a dash at all, and finished before any of his companions.

"Lend me your slate-pencil," said a little boy, "I

have dropped mine, and I dare not stoop to find it."

"I can't spare it," said Robert, "I have an answer to write yet." But when he had finished that, he did not offer it to the boy.

In the mental arithmetic Robert succeeded well, for he had no timidity to disturb his brains; but in the long sums he got on badly, for he had not troubled himself to comprehend the rules.

When the copy-books were exhibited, Robert came off with credit, for he really wrote well; and in geography and history he answered many questions well, because he was fond of reading; and Mary often got him to read aloud to them in the evenings out of the books he was able to get from the Mechanics' Library. But when the Scripture came he felt deficient, and was heartily glad when the subject was exchanged for questions on more general matters.

"Who is that intelligent looking boy?" asked a stranger of one of the committee.

"Do you mean Eyre," replied the other; "yes, he is clever, but spoiled with a good opinion of himself."

Robert did not hear the words, but he saw that the gentlemen were noticing him, and he plumed himself upon it; and to the next question, he gave a bold, but very silly, answer.

"Think a little," said Mr. Dugald, kindly.

Robert had nothing to fall back upon, and he gave the same answer in a worse form, and looked very cross when Mr. Dugald, in a few words, showed the absurdity of it. A titter amongst the boys completed Bob's discomfiture, and his replies were now given at hazard,

without any display of respect to his examiner. At the close of the examination, even Robert could not flatter himself that he had done well.

"Where is Bob Eyre?" asked some one, in the midst of the noise and confusion that ensued in the playground, as soon as the boys were dismissed; but Bob was nowhere to be seen.

"Poor Bob," said one of them, "he has got the pluck taken out of him to-day, I guess."

"Hasn't he done well?" asked another.

"I rather think not," replied the first. "He answered as bold as brass, of course; but when Mr. Dugald stuck up to him, and questioned him close, he hadn't a word to say."

"Served him right," said a third; "it was rare fun. If ever there was a stuck up ass, it's Robert Eyre."

"He's not an ass, however," said a friendly voice, "and I don't think it's kind of you to be abusing him behind his back."

"Well," replied the first, "Gregson is no friend of mine, with his sneaking ways"—("Mind, he's, may-be, behind the pump," put in a little lad, laughing); "but I had rather see Gregson win six times over than Robert Eyre." So little had Robert's selfish pride ingratiated him with his companions, in spite of his activity and fresh buoyant spirits.

The unconscious victim of their remarks was, meanwhile, strolling by himself beside the river; he was in no great hurry to appear at home, and he stopped now and then to amuse himself with chucking stones into the water. He was doing this in a dreamy sort of way, when he was startled by a rough voice calling to him. It was Jem

Taylor. Now, Jem Taylor was a boy that few honest parents would have liked to see their children with; and Robert's father, although he was not so particular as he afterwards became, had forbidden Robert to make a friend of him; but Jem pestered him with attentions, and Robert feared more than any thing that he should find out that it was to obey his father that he did not accept them readily.

"I say, Bob," cried Jem, "are you coming to see the cricket-playing on Sunday?"

"I think not," said Robert, blushing up to the roots of his hair.

"You'd better," continued Jem. "It is going to be quite a match; all the lads from Bilton are coming over, and I expect we shall have rare fun. Say you'll come, and I will look out for you upon the moor; or I shouldn't mind waiting for you at the White Lion in going up."

"No, thank you, Jem," said Robert, in a hesitating voice.

"Father's said no, may-be," said Jem, in a taunting way.

"Indeed he hasn't," replied the other, "for I have never asked him."

"Oh," returned Jem, in an apologizing tone, "I thought you were, may-be, one of them that have to ask their father if they may tie their shoes. Now, in these days of glorious independence, let each shift for himself, I say; no lad of spirit would be tied down by the rules that might do for slaves, but not for true-born Englishmen."

Robert's natural good sense would have revolted at this piece of wordy nonsense, had he not been flattered by a grown-up young man wanting him to join their

cricketing; and when Jem again said, "You'll come, then," he muttered something like, "Yes, I'll see;" and Jem, well satisfied, walked on, leaving his victim chucking the stones across the river in an uneasy, anxious way, as if he wanted to chuck his conscience along with them.

As Robert slowly walked towards home, he tried to satisfy himself that there could be no real harm in going with Jem Taylor; he was sure he knew him a great deal better than his father could do; and as for walking up to see a cricket-match, it was plain there could be no harm in that. To be sure, Mary would make a fuss about it, because it was to be on a Sunday; but there was one good thing, Mary never put herself forward, and she would know nothing about it, for he would not tell her. Thus arguing with himself, he had nearly forgotten school affairs, till he came into their own kitchen, when Mary, who was holding little Flora up to the canary cage, turned round, and asked, "Well, how have you got on, Bob?"

"Oh, very well," he answered, in an indifferent tone, as if that was a thing of course.

"That I am sure you have," said his too-partial mother.

But Sandy, who went to another school, was not so easily satisfied, and he began to ask Robert all sorts of questions about the examination, and Mr. Dugald, and the gentlemen.

This was vastly unpleasant to his brother, and he got cross. Then Sandy was saucy, and Mary had some trouble to prevent a quarrel between them.

"This is always the way, boys, when your father's out.

I am sure I shall be glad, Sandy, when Robert is at the training school, out of your way ; you tease him so," said their mother ; and then they sat down to dinner without their father, for he had a day's work among the clocks at Eshcot Hall.

Besides being the day for this important examination, this was also the last day of the half-year, before the boys were dismissed for a month's holiday ; and there was the usual bustle of gathering up slates and books, in addition to the excitement of waiting for the result of the examination. This was not declared till four o'clock, when, in the presence of several gentlemen, Mr. Dugald announced Thomas White and Matthew Gregson to be the successful candidates ; and one of the gentlemen made a speech and dismissed the school.

There was a moment's silence, and then a loud cheering arose from the boys. It was given for the committee, for White and Gregson, for the holidays, for anything indeed, just to express their excitement. But Robert did not join them, his heart seemed to die within him ; he had never really contemplated failure before, and he was ready to sink into the ground with mortification. He was soon roused into a state of defiance by some teasing looks, that some of the more ill-natured of the lads gave him ; and he said, almost loud, and in a blustering way ;—

" I don't care ; there has been some cheating somewhere, or else that sneak would never have got it."

As Robert said this, it happened that an old gentleman, who visited the school, and knew all the boys, was standing near ; he now turned round, and said ;—

" You will be getting into some trouble, Eyre, with

that impudent tongue of yours. Let me advise you, instead of blaming other people, to reflect that, if it had not been for your own pride and idleness, you might have been in Gregson's place now."

Robert looked down, not so much ashamed as annoyed that the boys should have heard him so reprovèd; and, hastily collecting his things, under cover of the coming darkness, he was quietly slipping away from the school-house, where he had expected to be so distinguished, when, as he stepped out, a good-natured little fellow, called Metcalfe, came up to him and said;—

"Bob, can I help you? I have hardly anything of my own to carry;" and they walked together home.

No one who has not felt themselves deserted by their friends, at the same time that they were losing a wished-for prize and receiving a well-deserved rebuke, could feel, as Robert did, how welcome was this act of kindness from even a little boy.

CHAPTER III.

“Nor is the dream untrue, for all around
The heavens are watching with their thousand eyes ;
We cannot pass our guardian-angel’s bound,
Resign’d or sullen, he will hear our sighs.”—KEBLE.

ROBERT did not climb the staircase very quickly, but he was met at the top by Sandy, who had forgotten all their squabbling, and was waiting eagerly for news.

“It’s no go,” said Robert, “Gregson’s got it.”

“Oh !” groaned Sandy, with a full meed of sympathy, “what a horrid shame !” and, running in before him, he spared Robert the unpleasant task of spreading the unwelcome news.

It was so unexpected by his mother that she fairly cried. The children looked sad because Robert had not got it, and puzzled because they did not know what it was he had not got. Mary felt it deeply, and looked very grave for once ; but she soon said, more cheerfully,

“It is a pity, Robert dear ! However, you are young yet ; and I have heard that the gentlemen are going to offer the same chance another year.”

And as Robert still was loaded with his books and slate, she began to make a place for them, and showed him how to arrange them. In this, however, he soon stopped her with a testy little speech, that startled her painfully, and made her sigh, though it was only, “I know how, Mary.”

But he was soon disturbed in his arrangement by the rapid entrance of his father. He came in with a look as black as thunder, threw his tools down upon a chair, and, pushing little Annie roughly by, he went up to Robert, and, seizing him by the collar, cried ;—

“ You idle vagabond, you ! ” giving him a shake with every word. “ What do you mean by disgracing us in this manner ? Is it not enough that you have lost all your chance of getting on at the school, but I must be met in the street by gentlemen who tell me that my son is so set up that he thinks that he can get anything without the trouble of trying for it, that he’s above his place, and that it’s I that have brought him up to it ? But if I have brought you up I’ll bring you down. You shall have no more schooling, I’ll apprentice you to-morrow to John Snip, the tailor, and you will learn to know yourself. Mary and all of them have flattered you up, till you don’t know what is good enough for you ; but there shall be no more spoiling at home, I can tell you.”

Mary knew she did not flatter Robert, but she thought she might have done more than she had to keep him to his work ; so she listened meekly to her father, and felt much for his mortification, which was so great that it made him in a passion even with his favourite son. It is a bitter thing when a parent’s love meets with such return.

The father finished by giving Robert a last shake, and throwing him from him, telling him to get out of his way ; and then he sat down gloomily, and scarcely spoke again for hours. Robert had disappeared ; but Mary, as she gently moved about, wondered if she could say any thing which would induce him to show that he was sorry. At

tea Annie noticed her brother's absence, but was quickly checked in her remarks; and soon afterwards the father went downstairs to work; and while the noise of his file was heard below, Mary was occupied in keeping the children quiet, and in cheering her mother.

This last was difficult. As the evening wore on, and Robert did not come back again, she got frightened, thinking that some harm had happened to him. Mary said, "He will very likely have gone to the Mackenzies; you know, he is very kind with Willie;" and they sent Sandy over to inquire; but when they found that Willie Mackenzie had never seen him, his mother got more uneasy still; and Sandy, who was a quiet amiable lad, said he would go out again and look for him.

"Not by yourself, Sandy," said his mother; "it is getting so late,—you would, may-be, get lost too."

"May I go with him, mother," said Mary.

"I wish you would, honey," replied her mother; "but wrap yourself up well, for the wind sounds piercing cold."

Mary got ready quickly, and they were just moving off, when their father came up, and asked, "Where they were going at that time of night?" in an angry way.

"Robert has not come in yet, father," said Mary, "and I was going out with Sandy to seek for him."

"Let him stay out," said her father, "a good for nothing——"

"But, father," said Mary, gently, "may I not go out to look for him? He may get into some harm, poor fellow; he was in such a way about your being so vexed with him."

A sort of grumbling sound was the only answer, but

Mary felt encouraged to say, "It may be a good thing for him in the end to be pulled back this way, he was dreadfully downcast when he first came in."

"So he ought to be," said her father, "losing such a chance; well, get along with you."

So Mary took her young brother by the hand, and started on her search. Sandy knew the places where Robert often went to; and he took her to the barber's, where he would lounge about, looking at the toys, and listening to Wilson's gossiping conversations with his customers; and to the Mechanics' Institute, and to little Jacob Metcalf's; but nobody had seen Robert. They inquired of several of his school-fellows with the same success; and, as a last resource, they went to Mr. Palmer, the schoolmaster himself.

"He's a wilful lad, Miss Eyre," said the schoolmaster, after he had told her he had not seen Robert since four o'clock; "and there is no knowing what he might take into his silly young head to do. I will go myself and search for him, if you like."

Mary, as she thanked him, declined his offer until she had tried a little further; but she said they would come back and tell him if they were still unsuccessful.

"I wonder if he is at Jem Taylor's," said Sandy, as they left the schoolmaster's.

"Oh! Sandy, surely not," exclaimed Mary, "after father has forbidden him to have anything to do with Jem."

"I don't know," said Sandy, "but Tom Coates told me he saw them together by the river-side this morning; perhaps he is by the river now,—he is fond of going there."

"By the river this cold night," said Mary, shivering, as she drew her cloak more closely round her—"I hope not;" but still she bent her steps that way.

Down the hill, across the narrow field that lay between the back of the houses and the river, and then to the shingly road that led along its banks. Silently the dark water flowed in the sombre moonlight; on the opposite side, black with darkness, as it lay under the tall trees that stretched their skeleton arms far over it. The brother and sister did not speak, but as they passed under one of the broad arches of the bridge that spanned the river, their footsteps sounded strange and hollow, and a chill came over them.

"That is where he often sits," said Sandy, pointing to a rock that overhung the water.

The rock had a hollow in the middle, which might form a seat, and in this hollow Mary saw something lying, as Sandy cried, "He's there, I'm sure."

A movement in the lying figure took away the nervous dread that had begun to creep over her, and Mary said, "Robert, dear Robert, is that you?" and although there was no answer, she ran forward, and laying her hand upon him, while her eyes filled with tears of relief, she cried, "Oh, my boy, how you have frightened us."

"What's the matter? What have you come here for?" muttered Robert, raising himself up.

"To find you: to bring you home, Robert, honey," said Mary; "we have been seeking you all over, and father and mother will be sadly frightened because we have been so long."

"They don't care," muttered Robert, with something like a sob.

"Indeed they do," said Mary. "You know how dearly mother loves you, Robert; and though father has been very angry with you, do you think he would not be grieved that you should be lying here alone this cold night?"

"Come, Bob," said Sandy, pulling at him.

Robert yielded to his brother's touch, and getting up, he stood beside them, very pale, as they could see, even by the faint moonlight.

"What's the good of my going home?" were his first words.

"What's the good? Oh, Robert, how can you talk so?" said Mary. "Why your hands are like lead; your teeth chatter; you are almost starved to death. Let us walk quickly along the road. Here, you shall have my cloak."

"No, no, Mary," cried the boy, now fairly crying. "I would not take it from you. You are far too kind to me. Why did you not leave me here?"

"If you will not have my cloak," said Mary, "put your arm well into mine, and that will give you some little warmth. It is a bitter night. And Sandy, you take the other side. There now, we will walk fast. Why Robert, my boy, I did not think you would have been so silly. What made you leave us all, and come down here by yourself?"

"Father was in such a rage with me," said Robert "and I was so miserable. What's the good of my going back again?" and he tried to release his arm from the comfortable, kind grasp she held it in.

"Nonsense, Robert," she said; "hadn't father a right to be angry, don't you think? when he had paid so much

for your schooling, and he wanted you to be so clever, and to get on so well. I know it was very mortifying for you, Bob, to lose the exhibition, but it was far worse for him that had set his hopes upon your getting it."

"Let me go," said Robert, struggling a little.

"Be quiet, Bob," said Mary, "and let me talk to you. I say father had a right to be angry with you. You had not done your best."

"Hadn't I," said Robert, fiercely.

"No," said Mary, in her gentle tones. "You would not have us think that was your best, Bob. You could have done far better, if you had tried. But you thought you were so clever, that you could do without working hard day by day, as everybody must, whatever prize they wish to gain—whether it be an earthly or a heavenly one. Yes, Robert dear! you thought too much of yourself: it was all pride. And it was pride that made you so mortified, and that made you feel father's anger in the way you did, and that made you come and sit out here, not caring how you frightened us at home, instead of staying to abide whatever father pleased. Do you mind my telling you this, Robert. Maybe you've been thinking the same yourself, as you sat down here; maybe you've been saying that you are going to be quite a different boy for the time to come; maybe you've been saying your prayers in the quiet moonlight, Robert, when none but God could see you. Oh, brother! if you were to go home now, and tell father you were sorry, and if you were to start fresh again on the blessed Christmas Day, how happy we should be—will you, Robert?"

Robert did not speak; but there was a movement in the arm she held that made her think he was not vexed

with her, and she went on speaking in a low, quick tone ; for Mary was strangely excited to-night, and under the cover of the darkness, she was opening her heart freely to her brother.

“ Can you tell, Robert, how it is that I know all about how you have felt ? It is because I have felt the same myself.”

“ You haven’t,” muttered Robert.

“ Yes, Robert, but I have indeed. Thank God, my pride is not the master that it was ; but I often feel it unsubdued, when any one speaks sharply to me, and at many other times ; but it will be conquered some day, by the help of One that is mightier than I, One that came to visit us in great humility. No one else can help us ; no one else can fight for us. Nothing can conquer this great enemy but the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

At this moment Mary felt the arm she held in hers shrink a little ; and, looking up, she found that they had reached the foot of their own staircase, and she stopped.

“ So we are at home,” she said. “ Now, Robert dear, you will go and make your peace with father, won’t you ? They’ll be watching for us, I know.” And letting the two boys pass before her, she followed them up the steps ; but at the top they waited for her, so she went forward and opened the kitchen-door.

It was a comfortable room, but it looked sad to-night. The father sat in the chair beside the table, his elbow resting on it to support his head, whilst he gazed into the fire. His wife was near him ; and whilst with her foot she rocked the cradle, her hands were busied with some sewing, but every now and then she stopped to wipe away the tears that dimmed her eyes. When she heard

the footsteps on the stairs, she raised her head, and it was an anxious yearning look that Mary met when she opened the door ; but the disappointment she was dreading was driven away by Mary's face, and she quickly rose to seize her lost boy by the arm and kiss him tenderly.

But Robert was unusually timid, and Mary had to draw him forward towards his father as she said, "Here is Robert, father ; he has been very miserable. I think he wants to tell you he is sorry. Will you not forgive him ?"

The father would not turn when he heard them come in ; but he, too, had been very anxious, and when Mary spoke he raised his head, and catching sight of his son—timid, pale, repentant—he held out his hand. Robert was overcome by this mute sign of love, and exclaiming, "I have been very bad, father," he burst into tears.

"You should not have gone out this way, Robert," was his father's only answer, in a gently reproaching tone ; and as he spoke he gently drew the lad towards a stool between himself and the fire, and said, "Warm yourself, you seem quite starved."

And there Robert sat and cried and thought, and none of them spoke much. But when bedtime came, and Robert had gone up-stairs, his mother crept up after him ; and then he told her how bad he knew now he had been, and how differently he meant to act in future ; and though she thought, in her partial fondness, that he blamed himself too much, she said, "That is right, my Robbie, father will be pleased."

But the good intentions Robert made that night were not fulfilled, as he had meant them to be, in active performance on the morrow. He had a different lesson yet

to learn, and the close of Christmas-day found him helpless on a bed of pain. So much exposure to the damp and cold had given him a rheumatic fever, and for a fortnight he was very ill. But with his mind attuned to profit by it, this illness was a blessing to him. The suffering humbled him, and the thought that his own wilfulness had been the cause made him patient under it. And when he felt his mother's tenderness, and Mary's watchful care, he often said, "I don't deserve such kindness." In three weeks Robert had learned much, and by the time that he was able to walk across the room with the help of a strong stick, the tall, pale youth was as much changed from the chubby, handsome Robert, as the impertinent rival of the successful Gregson was different from the gentle lad who only wished to show his sorrow for the trouble he had given.

At first he shrank from seeing any of his old schoolfellows ; but this feeling he overcame, and little Metcalfe first, and then many of the others, came to visit him ; and he would scarcely have been offended if he had overheard them say, "Have you seen Bob Eyre?—he is quite a different kind of fellow now."

But as he became more friendly with his schoolfellows, he the more regretted that he should never be at school with them again, and he would have given much to recall the hours he had wasted ; and he wondered if his father still meant to make him be a tailor. The prospect was very hard to him ; but he determined that if his father pleased to put him to it, he would do his best at the trade.

And the month's holidays of the school were just at an end, when, one afternoon, Robert, now strong again,

was walking in the sunshine, when he met the same old gentleman who had so reproved his forwardness. Passing with a quiet, respectful air, he touched his cap to him. The old gentleman returned his salutation, looked again at him, and then stopping, said,—

“You are not Eyre’s son, are you?”

“Yes, sir,” said Robert, blushing deeply.

“They tell me you have been very ill since I saw you last.”

“Yes, sir,” Robert answered; and then, taking courage, he continued, “I was very sorry, sir, that I was so rude that day, before you and the gentlemen, sir.”

“Eh, what?” said Mr. Grey, “I like that; it gives good promise of amendment, when a lad says he is sorry for doing wrong. Well, well; so you are going to start afresh. That is right. I hope you will be first next time.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Robert, “but——” and he hesitated.

“But what?” said Mr. Grey.

“Please, sir, I shan’t be at school this year.”

“Why not?” said the old gentleman.

“Father, sir, said I shouldn’t go any more,” he answered, with a sorrowful accent.

“Oh, well! of course he knows best,” replied Mr. Grey. “Then I will wish you well in whatever he puts you too. Good morning.”

“Good morning, sir,” said Robert, and he pursued his walk, thankful that he had been able to make this apology.

But Mr. Grey had not lost sight of him. He went directly to his father’s shop, where he found the watch-maker, for a wonder, behind his little counter.

"What are you taking your son away from school for?" asked Mr. Grey.

"Well, sir," said James Eyre, "I did say in a passion that he was not to go any more, and I can't say but I've repented it since. I don't want to keep to it, sir, if I thought that he would do any good at the school."

"Try him," said Mr. Grey, "he's clever enough; and now he looks as if he had got the conceit knocked out of him somehow, I advise you to let him have another chance."

The next morning the school was to begin; Robert could not help giving a deep sigh as the school-hour drew near, and he thought of the merry gathering in the play-ground.

"Where is your book-bag, Robert?" said his father, looking into the room.

Robert started; he had thought his father was some miles off, at Bilton. What could he mean?

"I have been telling Mr. Palmer," he continued, "that I think you'd better go on another year."

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Robert, scarcely believing his own ears; "but," he added, "indeed, if you like, I am willing to go to Snip's instead."

"No, no, my boy," said his father, laying his hand on Robert's shoulder kindly; "I am not afraid of you now. Go back to school, and whether you gain the prize or not this year, I feel sure of one thing, that you will never be a disgrace to us again."

So Robert went back to school, with an earnest wish to profit by his father's kindness. His master received him kindly, and many of the boys gave him a hearty welcome; but it was only by degrees that he found out how

many difficulties still lay in his path. Jem Taylor had ceased to molest him, but there were plenty of lads at the school who tried to draw him away from his newly-formed good habits; and many who, thinking themselves above him, would sneer at the efforts of the poor watch-maker's son. And worse than all, was the inward enemy that Mary had told him of, which was always lying in wait to be aroused; but, happily, with the consciousness of his failing, Robert had also gained a charm by which to conquer it, and with the thought of His great example, and with the prayer for strength through Him, the Christian school-boy seldom failed to subdue his foe.

And as the year of trial passed on, each week of it saw him less presuming, less self-confident, yet far more worthy of esteem; and when, at the end of the second Christmas examination, he gained, not only the reward his father wished for, but also much public commendation, what gladdened Mary's heart at least the most, was the modest, humble way in which her brother bore his honours.

Ruth Benson;
OR,
THE POWER OF HOPE.

CHAPTER I.

“Though dark may be earth’s vale, and damp,
A thousand stars shine sweetly o’er us ;
And Immortality’s pure lamp
Gladdens and gilds our path before us.”—BOWRING.

RUTH BENSON was an orphan. She had known a father’s care and a mother’s love, and she had lived to be deprived of both ; but happily Ruth was able heartily to join in that prayer of our Communion service, wherein “we bless God for those departed in His faith and fear.”

In the faith and fear of God Ruth’s parents had always lived, and secure of immortality through their Saviour’s merits they had died, leaving to their only child their little house with all its furniture, and a small sum of money in the Savings-bank ; and what was better still, a good example and an honoured name.

Ruth had no near relatives except one aunt, who lived far away, and whom she had never seen. She was left in the world without any relations that she knew ; but she had many earthly friends, and she had also the blessed knowledge of an almighty Friend, who would never leave her or forsake her.

Ruth had lost those dearest to her, and in her heart there was sometimes an aching void, yet she was neither poor nor unhappy. When the first natural pangs of desolation had gone by, she raised her head with courage; and looking forward with fixed but humble hope to that day when she should follow her beloved ones, she set herself to consider what there was left for her to do.

Since her mother's death, Anne Miller, a very old friend, who had always been kind and neighbourly, and particularly so during Mrs. Benson's last illness, had lived with Ruth, leaving her own cottage in the care of a sister for a short time, that she might be some stay and comfort to her old neighbour's child during her first sorrow. Now, Ruth and Anne Miller were sitting by the clean fireside, having a long talk about their future prospects.

"You will not stay here by yourself, honey?" said Anne Miller. "It would not be pleasant, leastways proper, for one so young as you are; else you might have made enough to keep you nicely by plain sewing, or perhaps by selling garden stuff."

"No, Anne," said Ruth, trying to keep her voice steady, "I should certainly have liked to live still in the old house, and I fancied I might have managed; but mother knew best, and she said that I must leave it."

"It is strange that you should never have heard from your aunt Martin, Ruth," said Anne.

"It does seem odd," said Ruth; "one might almost think they were all dead, or, may-be, gone to Canada or Australia, else surely they would have written me a line."

"When did your letter go?" asked Anne.

"Last Monday three weeks," replied Ruth; "so I need not wait much longer. If they would have had me, I was to have gone to them; but as it is, I must seek out for some decent service, where I may stay until I'm old enough to come back and live here, as I mean to do, please God, some day."

"I'm afraid service will not suit you well, after being always used to such a different kind of life, Ruth," said Anne Miller.

"Everything seems so changed now, that it will not matter much," answered Ruth, with a sort of mournful smile; "and it would have been a deal worse, if I had had to go whilst they were living. It will not be half so bad being in a strange place now, when I shall have no pleasant home to think of and to pine for,—no earthly home, I mean; for you know, Anne, that the best home of all we can look forward to, wherever we may be."

"Ay, honey," said Anne, "that was your mother's comfort, and it will be yours too if you hold it fast. Never lose sight of that hope, Ruth, whatever worldly snares may be around you, and it will keep you pure and free from evil, as poor Meggie would have had you be."

"The Lord help me to do so, Anne," said Ruth, clasping her hands together, and bowing her head reverently. It had been her mother's last prayer for her, and the impression was yet strong upon her mind.

The next morning Anne went back to her own house, for Ruth did not care at all for being left alone. Anne, however, still returned to sleep with her; and another very kind friend, Mrs. Turner, often came up to see her; so she was not lonely.

And now, as Ruth had heard nothing from her only relative, the aunt Martin she had mentioned, she resolved to lose no time in seeking a situation; and in obedience to the wishes of her mother, who had desired her on all important occasions to ask advice of Mr. and Mrs. Elmsley, their good clergyman and his wife, Ruth bent her steps one morning towards the Rectory.

There Ruth was well known, for she had attended regularly at the Sunday school, from the time that she could be trusted to walk there alone, and had always been one of the best-behaved and most attentive scholars there. Since she had been confirmed, the year before, she had been teacher to a class of little ones; but she had also still attended the instructions of Mrs. Elmsley every Monday evening, when that lady assembled a number of the bigger girls at her own house.

Mrs. Elmsley, as well as her husband, had also known Ruth's parents long, and had respected them. They had promised always to be friends to Ruth, and had themselves desired her to come to them in any difficulty. To Mrs. Elmsley, therefore, Ruth now went, to consult her about the best means of placing herself in service. She was received very kindly; and when Mrs. Elmsley found that Ruth wished to have a situation as under-housemaid, or as nursemaid, in the country—not in a town, for her mother had a horror of young girls lounging about the streets with children—she said that she would inquire if any of her friends wanted a young maid, and give Ruth a good recommendation. Meanwhile, she added, that if Ruth felt inclined to work, there was some linen to be made up for Mr. Charles Elmsley, who was going to the University, and she might help Mrs. Elmsley's maids to

sew, for which she should have a shilling a day and live at the Rectory, which would be better for her than staying at home by herself.

Ruth thanked the kind lady gratefully, and said she should be very glad to do some sewing; and accordingly the next morning, after setting all in order, she made up a small bundle to take with her, and, locking the door, left her house, calling to bid good-morning to Anne Miller, and to leave the key at Mrs. Turner's, and then made the best of her way to the Rectory.

There she was soon seated in Mrs. Elmsley's dressing-room at work with Jane, a superior young woman, who was her mistress's personal attendant, as well as being head housemaid; and to this room Mrs. Elmsley, accompanied by her daughter Frances, soon came, on hearing of Ruth's arrival. Any one might have been pleased with the appearance of the young girl, as she stood respectfully before the ladies in her neat new mourning. Her brown hair was smoothly brushed away from her comely face; and although you could not, it is true, see on her mouth the former merry smile, there was a quiet and even cheerful expression that told of a mind at ease, and a spirit which, though tried with suffering, could gently rest itself on a strength that was unfailing.

Miss Frances had been from home for some time, and was glad to see her old favourite, and spoke kindly to her; and Mrs. Elmsley told Ruth that she had already written to a lady in the neighbourhood, whom she knew had required a maid some little time ago, and hoped to have an answer in a day or two. She then gave Ruth some directions about her work, and before she left the

room, told Jane to take care of her, and see that she was comfortable.

For a week, Ruth continued her work without interruption, and was quite contented. She and Jane had much sensible conversation, talking, not as some servants do, about their mistresses' affairs, or detailing bits of village gossip, but relating the good things they had read and heard of in their lives, and discoursing on Ruth's future prospects. Jane, who had been in service for many years, would sometimes amuse Ruth with stories of the various trials, as well as pleasant incidents, she had met with in her life, and made use of her experiences to caution Ruth, and to show her that faithfulness, honesty, and patience could alone enable her to be comfortable in any place, because there was none where there would not be something to put up with; for Jane, though very pious, was rather of a gloomy turn of mind—the only thing which made Mrs. Elmsley think her an unsuitable companion for the young mourner.

But Ruth would only say,—“I'm not afraid, Jane; the heaviest storm will only last for its appointed time, and then the sunshine comes again.”

“You're right, my dear,” said Jane, when Ruth had answered thus one day; but added, with a sigh, for Jane had lost all her family, some by death, and two by what was worse, disgrace,—“but there's many a rough sea to be weathered before we can be landed on the shores above.”

And to this Ruth did not reply. Perhaps it took her thoughts to the haven in which she trusted her own loved ones were, and they were silent until Jane began to speak about the wonders of the seaside, which were quite familiar to her, because she had often been there with

the families she had lived with, but which were quite unknown to Ruth.

The time thus quietly passed away, and a second week had begun, when Mrs. Elmsley one day informed Ruth that her application had been successful; the lady she had mentioned still required a servant, and would take Ruth, young as she was, provided that her appearance should be satisfactory. It was as a sort of parlour-maid that Mrs. Philips wanted Ruth; and as it was a quiet, respectable family, Mrs. Elmsley thought it would be a very proper place for her. Mrs. Philips was said to be very strict; but that would be no worse for Ruth. "In a first place," Mrs. Elmsley said, "it was a great advantage to a girl to have a particular, careful mistress, who would prevent her from falling into idle or untidy ways."

And the next day, Ruth being allowed a holiday, she walked over to Barnsley-fields, the name of Mrs. Philips's residence, and her looks and manner satisfying that lady, she was engaged to go there in a fortnight. Ruth then returned to the Rectory, where she remained until the sewing was all finished, and then had two or three days in which to arrange her own affairs before turning out into the world.

The day on which she left the Rectory, Ruth had an interview with her kind clergyman, who counselled her to let her cottage to some decent person, with the furniture, or part of it, and to make an agreement with the tenants that she should always have a home there, for a week or two, in case of ill-health or change of place. "In which case," continued Mr. Elmsley, "it will be desirable to be careful as to whom you let it. Let me see, who is to help in managing your affairs?"

"Mr. Turner, sir," Ruth answered.

"Ah, yes, I remember," said the Rector. "Your poor father acted with his usual prudence when he selected Turner as his trustee. He is a most respectable man. I will have some talk with him immediately."

Ruth was much pleased, and soon went home, where she found plenty to occupy her. The furniture she divided in two parts,—the strong useful things, which might be left, and the more ornamental and more treasured portion. Amongst the latter were her mother's chest of drawers and her work-box, the looking-glass, her father's chair, the large Bible, and many smaller things. On these Ruth could not look without a sigh. But she was not a girl to spend her time in sighing; so she put her bonnet on, and went down the village to consult Mrs. Turner.

This good woman, who with her husband had always been the Bensons' friends, went back with Ruth, and was busy with her looking over all the things, when her husband followed them. He had seen the rector, he said, and they had had a long talk together about Ruth's affairs; and as it happened, just at the right time, those bits of young things, Alice Caldwell and Timothy Tindal, were going to get married, and of course they wanted a place to live in. "Now, Timothy," continued Robert Turner, "has some money of his own, which is the only excuse for his settling so early, and he wants to farm a little; so I am thinking of stepping down to old Abraham's to-night, and giving them the first offer of this house."

Ruth was quite willing; so it was done. The young people were glad to give a pretty good rent for the

cottage, which was conveniently near to some fields that they had taken, and also to take the furniture, which would save them buying. The things which Ruth did not wish to have used, could be stored away, and locked up in the spare room, which the young couple did not want.

"I know that Alice has been brought up in tidy ways," said Mrs. Turner; "but I will often step up and see how they are coming on; for I should not like your poor mother's furniture to be badly used, and we could easily make some change if there was need of it. And mind, Ruth," continued the good woman kindly, "though it was quite right to make a bargain with them about coming here when you liked, I should be much hurt if you did so. If at any time you have a holiday, or you want a home for a few days, for any reason, you must come to us; and though it may be a bit dull for you, now when William's away, you'll always find a hearty welcome."

"You are very kind," said Ruth, looking gratefully at Mrs. Turner. "Surely never any poor girl had so many kind friends as I have. Anne Miller wanted me to stop these few days with her; and old Mrs. Barker even asked me to go and get tea with her; and now you. I am sure I do not know how to thank you all."

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Turner, kindly, "it would be strange if your father's daughter was ever slighted in this country; but you must remember that Robert has a sort of right to look after you, seeing that your poor father put all his worldly goods and chattels in his care. He is, as one may say, your guardian like, same as Sir Thomas is to little Miss Ridley, at the Hall, you know."

Ruth smiled to hear herself likened to the pretty

young heiress, with her beautiful dresses, and hats and feathers, who often came driving through the village with her governess in the low pony-carriage, and a smart liveried servant riding after her ; but she thanked Mrs. Turner for all her kind offers, and then went on to talk about her situation.

When Mrs. Turner heard that it was settled that she was to go to Barnsley-fields, she told Ruth that it was a very odd thing—but such odd things did happen—that in his last letter, William, her only son, who was learning his trade as a cabinetmaker, had said that they had just been finishing a large bookcase for Mr. Philips ; and, somehow or other, after that, Ruth liked the idea of her new place better than she did before.

And the day came when Ruth was to leave the house which had always been her home. Her boxes had gone by the carrier the day before, so there was nothing left for her to do. She had put on her neat black dress and cape and bonnet, and she had been round the house to take the last look of every corner of it, and she now knelt down for the last time beside her little bed, and prayed that if she never was permitted to come back to her earthly home, she might be daily strengthened by Almighty grace for her new duties, and might be supported in her trials, and fitted for the heavenly home that had, she humbly hoped, been bought for her by the precious death of her Redeemer.

Then, wiping away the tears that still would flow, she went downstairs, took down the canary-cage, which was to be put under the care of Anne Wright's sick sister, to whom it would give constant pleasure ; and after turning the large key in the door, went to Anne Wright's

to leave her warbling burden, and to say good-bye; and then proceeded to Mrs. Turner's, where she was to have breakfast, before setting off with Robert in his light spring cart.

During the hospitable meal, Ruth had to tell them all about her farewell visit to the Rectory, the day before, when Mr. Elmsley had spoken so kindly to her, and Mrs. Elmsley had given her a little Prayer-book and a Bible in a case, as a present from Miss Frances and herself, and she had to receive much good advice from both Robert and his wife.

Then, whilst Robert had gone out to see about the cart, Mrs. Turner, who had been fidgeting here and there for several minutes, getting out a warm shawl for Ruth, and a cushion for her to sit upon, now went up the wooden stairs, to which a back door in the corner of the kitchen opened, and presently returned with something in her hand that was wrapped up carefully in an old newspaper.

"Now, Ruth, lass," she said, unfolding it, "I must not let you leave the house without a parting gift; so here is a little box for you." It was a pretty square box, made of finely-grained cherry-wood, and very neatly finished, with a lock to it. "It may serve to put your thimble and your needles in, and you will not like it the less because it was your old playfellow that made it. Poor William, he said it was a rough specimen, but, to my liking, it is very nicely put together."

"Oh, thank you! Mrs. Turner," said Ruth, her eyes glistening with tears of gratification: "I am very much obliged to you; but you won't like to part with it, will you, being William's work?"

"I'll give it to you, my dear," said Mrs. Turner, "and

say no more about it. Let it mind you of tidiness and industry, as your Bible and Prayer-book will of faith and humility, and you will do well both for this world and the next. But here's Robert with the cart. God bless you, Ruth ; keep steady, and don't forget your mother's ways, and write to us how you get on. Good-bye." And, with a motherly kiss, the kind woman helped the young girl into the cart, while Robert held the rather frisky horse's head, and then, changing places with her husband, the latter got up beside Ruth, and they drove away.

CHAPTER II.

“Art thou faithful? Then oppose
Sin and wrong with all thy might;
Care not how the tempest blows,
Only care to win the fight.”

LYRA GERMANICA.

ROBERT TURNER had enough to do for the first mile or two in managing his mettlesome young horse, so Ruth had time to amuse herself with holding fast her parcel, and thinking about a little ornamental needle-case which had been given to her last Candlemas as a fairing, and which had a right surely, if anything had, to be kept in the new box.

By the time the horse had begun to know its master, and to be contented with going quietly along the middle of the road without making frantic plunges at the hedges, they had reached the turning that led down to Barnsley-fields, and the cart stopped, that Ruth might get out; for Robert Turner was going to the neighbouring town to market. Ruth bid him good-bye, and, followed by his best wishes, set off down the lane, her good guardian waiting to see her fairly started on her solitary path into the world before he pursued his journey to the market-town.

Ruth went steadily on down the lane, through the gate, and past a grove of trees, to the back door of Mrs. Philips's house, where, rather timidly, she knocked. She was quickly recognized as “the new parlour-maid,” and very hospitably received by the kitchen part of the esta-

blishment. She was then taken to the servants' bedroom to leave her bonnet, and afterwards, by Mrs. Philips's orders, shown into the breakfast-room, that she might be told her duties.

Mrs. Philips was a lady who, though not really unkind in her nature, yet belonged to that stern school of disciplinarians who always think young people are inclined to be presuming and impertinent, and will, therefore, require constant watchfulness and putting down. She also considered servants as a necessary evil, scarcely looked upon them as fellow-creatures, was constantly finding fault with them, and treated them as if they were always in a conspiracy to take advantage of their mistress. In fact, Mrs. Philips was invariably in a state of defence, stood "attention," and the smallest deviation from obedience she regarded as the symptom of a mutiny.

It is true that Mrs. Philips's strict ideas of discipline were not totally confined to her servants: the children—at least her daughters—were brought up in great subjection, and in their mother's presence scarcely dared to speak. They, however, amply revenged themselves when out of it, by tyrannizing in their turn over the servant who came most within their power; and two parlour-maids had left within the last six months, declaring that "missis," particular as she might be, was not one half so bad to please as Miss Philips and Miss Sophia.

It was to the presence of these formidable personages, Mrs. Philips, Miss Philips, and Miss Sophia, that Ruth was summoned now; and they constituted the whole of the family at present at home, with the exception of Mr. Philips, a harmless sort of man, who was occupied all the day with some manufacturing or mercantile concerns,

and, leaving all other matters to his wife, was quite satisfied if he found a good dinner waiting his return, and was allowed to occupy his easy chair, and read his newspaper in peace; and Master Walter, a young gentleman about eight years old, who should not have been left until the last, as he had contrived somehow to usurp his father's place, and not only to be the master of the house, but, strange and sad as it may sound, on most occasions to be master of his mother.

For Master Walter was that most unpleasant and unhappy member of a household, a spoiled child; and his various humours were not the least important trials of the parlour-maid at Barnsley-fields. But Master Walter was at present in the garden; therefore it was only before the ladies that Ruth appeared.

It would have been difficult to find fault with Ruth's pleasant, wholesome-looking face, or her neat attire; no wide sleeves or useless ornament destroyed the propriety of her dress, and her white cap and apron promised cleanliness. Mrs. Philips's glance relaxed a little; she was satisfied; but not for worlds would she have let the young girl know it; and in a sharp voice she began to give minute directions for her numerous duties; amongst which she enumerated attending on Miss Philips and Miss Sophia, pointing to those young ladies with her fingers as she spoke, and causing them to look up from their respective occupations, and bestow a scrutinizing stare on Ruth, which rather put her out of countenance.

"And besides these things," continued Mrs. Philips, "I shall expect you to be ready to do anything that I may tell you. I have never before taken so young a girl as you are; it is to oblige Mrs. Elmsley that I am trying

you, so you must do your best; and remember that I am very particular, and shall not overlook any negligence. Now go into the garden and bring Master Walter in; take his things off and brush his hair, and then prepare the tray for luncheon."

Ruth made a curtsy, and, with one look at a large new bookcase that stood between the windows, she left the room. We cannot say that she had taken a violent liking for her mistress, but she thought that Mrs. Philips was very good to say that she would show her when things were not done rightly, and she hoped that she should soon get into the way of pleasing her. So, going back into the kitchen, she inquired the road into the garden, and being directed there, found the object of her search in a distant corner, sitting upon a wheel-barrow turned upside down, and eating a green apple.

"Please, Master Walter, you have to come in; will you go with me?" said Ruth, who had been little used to children, and was rather shy with them.

"I shan't come in," was the reply; and a piece of apple-core was thrown at Ruth.

She only smiled, and said,—

"You don't know me; perhaps that is the reason. I am the new parlour-maid, and I am called Ruth; your mamma sent me for you, pray come;" and Ruth took hold of the boy's hand with gentle force.

But the hand was pulled away in a moment, and aimed at Ruth's face with such agility, that she could not quite escape the blow, and it smartly touched her cheek. Her colour rose, she would have liked to have given him a good slap in exchange, but she knew that would not be right, and only said, rather hastily,—



"Oh, Master Walter, you are a very naughty boy; you ought to come in directly, when your mamma has sent for you."

"I tell you, I won't come in, you ugly thing," cried Walter, "and I will throw this stone at you, if you don't go away directly."

"I am going," said Ruth, turning as she spoke, "and I shall tell your mamma what a bad boy you are."

"Will you?" exclaimed the boy: "there, then!" and he threw the stone after her with such force that it bounded along the gravel-walk and then hit her on the ankle."

This was rather more than the young girl's spirit could endure, and turning back, she seized Master Walter in her stout arms, and before he had recovered sufficiently from his surprise to make any resistance, she had borne him up the long walk into the house, and through the passage to the breakfast-room, where, breathless with her excitement and exertions, she placed him on the floor before her mistress, and gasped out, "He would not come, ma'am; he struck me, and threw a stone at me."

"I didn't, ma," said Master Walter who was now crying lustily, and had rushed up to his mother's side. "She is a nasty cross thing, ma; she has squeezed me, and shaken me, and hurt me very much;" and here he roared again.

Mrs. Philips at first had seemed petrified with amazement, but she now found her speech, and standing up, she put one arm round the blubbering boy, as if to protect him from a fury, and said in the harshest tones to Ruth, who was still red and panting,—

‘You violent girl, do you think I am going to allow you to ill-treat my precious boy in this way?’

“Please ma’am——” began Ruth.

“Hold your tongue,” interrupted her mistress; “I never permit a servant to reply to me. There can be no excuse. You must have acted very improperly indeed. I bid you bring in Master Walter, and you had only to obey me quietly and pleasantly, and I am sure you would have had no trouble. See how you have excited the poor child; and he is so delicate, that it might bring on a fever. I am very much displeased, and if ever you behave in this manner again, I shall pack you off at once. Go and send Anne to wait upon the child. It is very clear that you are too bad-tempered to manage him properly.”

With some difficulty the young girl gulped down the passionate justification of herself that she would have liked to give, and left the room. In the passage she felt inclined to cry; but in this she also controlled herself; but she did loiter a few minutes before the passage-window, thinking that Mrs. Philips was most unjust. As she stood, however, a bird flew across the window. It was a dove—a white one. Ruth had kept pigeons once, and loved them dearly, and she thought of her dear old home; then she looked further, and saw the light fleecy clouds, so pure and unearthly, and the clear blue sky beyond; and Ruth felt penitent, yet comforted, and after a moment’s raising of her heart in prayer, walked quietly into the kitchen.

After she had sent Anne the housemaid into the sitting-room, and whilst she was setting out the things for luncheon, Ruth was thinking deeply; and she must have thought to good purpose, for it was with a meek,

and at the same time a cheerful countenance, that she took the tray into the room.

"Set it there," said Mrs. Philips sternly; "lay that corner of the cloth quite straight. That water-caraffe is not bright; take it away again, and polish it."

Ruth obeyed, and brought it back quite faultless. Some other orders were then received and attended to, some sewing given her to be doing till the bell should ring for her, and then Ruth might have left the room; but she paused a moment, and turning towards her mistress, said respectfully,—

"I am sorry, ma'am, that I was so rough with Master Walter; I did not know that he was delicate."

"Whether he was delicate or not," returned Mrs. Philips, "your conduct was violent and improper. See that you avoid it for the future." And Ruth, hoping that her mistress was now better satisfied, went away.

This little storm was but the prelude to many other troubles. It seemed as if, from the first hour in the morning, when Ruth was expected to assist the housemaid, and had to do most of her dirty work, she was to be at the beck of every one. From lighting fires and polishing of grates, she would be summoned to attend Mrs. Philips and the young ladies. Three pairs of hands would hardly have enabled her to satisfy them. "Where is Ruth?—never here when she is wanted," would Miss Sophia cry; whilst her eldest sister would be saying,— "You stupid creature!—I told you to get up these muslin sleeves for me last night. Finishing mamma's flounced dress! Oh, nonsense!—you could have done both if you had liked." Perhaps succeeded by the other saying—"Here, Ruth, brush my hair. How clumsy

you are! your fingers are all thumbs." And when they could find fault with nothing else, they complained against her willing smile. "It was no use speaking to the girl," they said,—“she seemed quite hardened.”

She certainly ought to have got hardened, for there was scarcely an hour in the day when some one was not calling her, until that most unpleasant time of all, the hour of dinner. She had of course been quite unused to this attendance, and though she tried her best to be quick and quiet, the two best qualities in a waiter, yet she could not please her mistress. Her directions and complaints seemed endless, until at last her husband, in despair, would venture to say, “The girl does very well, I think, my dear;” upon which the lady’s wrath would be turned upon her husband, until Ruth wished that he had not interfered in her behalf. Besides all this, the events of the first day were not lost upon Master Walter. He bore Ruth a grudge for her unceremonious treatment of him; and knowing that he could gratify his feelings without danger of reproof, he spared no opportunity of doing so,—and many a sly pinch or kick was bestowed on his attendant, when she had to wash or dress him against his inclinations; and he enjoyed few things more than making Ruth run an errand for him, or leave her sewing to pull him round the garden in his carriage, when he knew that it would cause her to be scolded for her idleness.

But Ruth’s courage did not fail her. She was young and strong, and she ran up and down stairs, hither and thither, without flagging. If she had made a mistake,

she acknowledged it ; if she was scolded, she endeavoured to do better ; if her young master was tyrannical and rude, she used to smile and say, " You will know better when you are a little older, Master Walter ;" or, " Don't you think you are unkind to poor Ruth, Master Walter ?" until at length her patient cheerfulness had some effect. Walter had not really a bad disposition, although indulgence had nearly choked up all that was good in it, and by degrees he began to have not only a sort of liking for poor Ruth, but also a respect for her ; and the quiet " It is not right to do so, Master Walter," had sometimes a wonderful effect upon him.

The young ladies still called her stupid and careless, and awkward, when she attended them ; but they would allow sometimes, when she was not within hearing, that Ruth helped them to dress, and mended their clothes, and got up their muslins better than any maid they had had before ; and Mrs. Philips one day, about two months after Ruth's first coming, when Mrs. Elmsley called on her, said, in answer to an inquiry of how she liked her new servant, that, considering how young she was, so much younger a parlour-maid than Mrs. Philips had been accustomed to, Ruth was not so troublesome as might have been expected ; she was industrious, and if a servant's manner could be trusted, extremely willing. As she passed through the hall, when her call was over, Mrs. Elmsley stopped to speak to Ruth, who had come to open the door for her, and when she looked at the bright, cheerful countenance, she could not doubt that Ruth was trying to do her duty, and she spoke a few words of kindness and encouragement, which made Ruth

feel as if she should not care for any little trouble any more. For we are not to suppose that Ruth did not feel her troubles; she often felt impatient, sometimes would have liked to give a saucy answer, sometimes was so weary of reproof and fault-finding, that she felt as if she would like to run away; but it was only for a moment; she never indulged the evil thought, but, strong in her heavenly armour, did battle with her adversary.

CHAPTER III.

“Trust Him to right thee who can take
Vengeance whene’er He will ;
Forget thyself, and for His sake,
Be silent, and be still.”—PARISH MUSINGS.

WHEN Ruth had been about three months at Barnsley fields, she had to go through a worse trial than any of the petty troubles that had gone before. The housemaid, Anne, who has been previously mentioned, had left Mrs. Philips’s service in bad health, and her place had been supplied by a smart new maid from London. Sarah, this new housemaid, was a young woman of frank and easy manners, and talked in a very amusing style ; but there was something about her always that Ruth did not like. She felt as if she could not trust her. She knew that Sarah never, at least openly, said her prayers, and that she scoffed at clergymen and sacred subjects whenever they were mentioned in the kitchen.

One Sunday evening, when they had come from church, Sarah began to imitate the clergyman who had preached, mocked him, and turned his sermon into ridicule. Ruth was so much annoyed that she begged Sarah to desist. This only encouraged her to go on, and she said such wicked things about the Bible and religion, that Ruth at last left the kitchen and went up into her own room.

This praiseworthy conduct of the young girl irritated Sarah very much, and though Ruth never spoke of it

again, and was always agreeable and ready to help Sarah in her work, the latter did not forgive the affront, as she considered it, and declared that she would be revenged upon that sneaking hypocrite, as she called poor Ruth; and Sarah kept her word.

The drawing-room at Barnsley-fields was beautifully fitted up. There were in it rich curtains, easy chairs, and ottomans; the tables were filled with curiosities, handsome books, or works of art; and dispersed about the room were little statues of great value. In this room the family rarely sat, except on state occasions, and Mrs. Philips was very particular about the dusting of it, which she generally watched herself. One fine morning, Master Walter was to go out with his mamma and sisters, to pay a visit at some distance, and Ruth was ordered to dress him carefully; but instead of going quietly to be dressed, the child, who was in one of his most frolicsome humours, chose to run away, crying out, "Catch me if you can." Ruth followed, good-humouredly; but, to her horror, he dashed into the drawing-room, and before she could come up to him, had made his way between the crowded furniture to a low French window, through which he passed into the garden.

Through the window Ruth went after him; and when he had reached the lawn he stopped, and, satisfied with having teased her enough, consented to be led back to the house. He would, however, go back by the same way as he had come, and Ruth consenting, because indeed it would have been in vain refusing, they went into the drawing-room again, Ruth taking care to shut the window after them. They were quietly passing through this room when Walter stopped before a small statue of

great value, which stood on a pedestal near the fireplace. It was the veiled figure of a pensive nun, the lovely face and graceful form dimly showing between the folds of the marble veil. Walter called on Ruth to see how beautiful it was. Ruth joined heartily in the boy's admiration, then wanted to proceed; but Master Walter, seized with one of his customary whims, vowed that she should not stir until she had kissed the sweet lady's outstretched hand. Ruth demurred at first; but he insisted, and she gently touched the marble fingers with her lips: the little tyrant was then satisfied, and they went away. Just as Ruth, still holding Walter by the hand, had carefully shut the drawing-room door behind her, her mistress appeared, prepared for her drive, and angrily inquired why Ruth was coming out of that room, and why Walter was not ready. Ruth gently answered,—

“I am going to dress Master Walter directly, ma'am;” and Walter, for once, yielding to her guiding hand, they passed the lady before she had time to say more.

Walter was soon ready, and, in high spirits, accompanied his mamma. During the ladies' absence, Ruth was busily employed in turning the skirt of one of Miss Sophia's dresses, and, except to attend to the fires, and pound some sugar for the cook, she scarcely stirred during the day. Once, however, she had occasion to go to Miss Sophia's room for some brown braid, and as she passed the open hall-door, Sarah was just coming out of the drawing-room in a hurry. Ruth saw her; but only passed quickly on, and returned to her own work.

Her mistress and the young ladies came back without Walter, and Ruth found that he was to stay all night with the friends whom they had gone to visit. Miss Sophia

was pretty well contented with her dress, which Ruth had finished; and Mrs. Philips, being in a remarkably good humour, talked to her husband during dinner, and forgot to tell Ruth that the silver was badly cleaned, or that Ruth was the most awkward waiter she had ever seen, as she usually did.

Some time afterwards Ruth was occupied in her pantry washing up the plates that had been used at dessert, when the bell rang violently. Ruth quickly answered it. Mrs. Philips was standing in the middle of the room, apparently in a very excited state, haranguing her husband and the girls, and holding in her hand the broken head of the beautiful veiled statue. Ruth started, and made some sort of exclamation.

"Now don't pretend to be surprised," exclaimed her mistress, in a loud and angry tone, "when you know that it was you who broke it."

"No, ma'am, indeed I did not," replied Ruth, firmly, although her heart beat at the accusation.

"You need not try to impose upon me," said Mrs. Philips; "you had better confess at once that you did break it."

"But I did not, ma'am, I assure you," said Ruth.

"How dare you say so, you wicked girl, when I saw you myself coming out of the drawing-room this morning, where, you know, you had no business to be?"

"I had only been following Master Walter, ma'am," said Ruth, who was now trembling all over. "I know the figure was safe then, because Master Walter stopped to look at it, and, in his fun, he would have me kiss the hand that was held so. I know that it was not broken then."

"Don't expect me to believe any such nonsensical stories," said Mrs. Philips, impatiently. "I would rather that you had broken anything in the house than this valuable statue, and so would your master. He is extremely angry."

Mr. Philips, good man, was occasionally brought in, as if he were a terrific personage; but his supposed displeasure was well known to be quite harmless. Now, however, hearing himself referred to, he ventured to put in a word, and said,—

"The girl may be speaking the truth, my dear. Would it not be as well to ask the other servants?"

Mrs. Philips took no notice of the suggestion at the time; but after declaiming against Ruth a little more, and declaring that she was determined to have the matter sifted to the bottom, and whoever had done the mischief should be packed off immediately, she rang the bell again. Sarah appeared this time, and on being asked if she had broken the veiled lady, or knew who did it, she exclaimed, "Lawk, ma'am! the statute a broken, that is a sad pity," with a glance at Ruth. "Me, ma'am; no, indeed; I never was near the place to-day, at least since you was there yourself this morn-ing. You know, ma'am, you particklerly desired that I wouldn't a dust till you was by; and as for the shutters, I was just a saying to cook, 'Cook, I've neglected the drawing-room windows; I must go and shut them up;' but it's quite a mercy, ma'am, that I'd not set off."

"And you are sure, Sarah," said Mrs. Philips, who felt a little afraid of her dashing housemaid, "that you have never been in the drawing-room whilst I have been our?"

"Oh no, ma'am," said Sarah, decidedly, "I 'ave never entered it."

"Oh, Sarah," said Ruth quickly, "I saw you coming out of the room this afternoon."

"Indeed, miss, did you?" said Sarah, turning round quite sharply. "Very well. If you will aggravate me with your lies, I shall just tell me missis the 'ole truth—if you will excuse me for one moment, ma'am."

Sarah slipped out of the room, leaving all too much surprised to speak, and returned in a minute with a fragment of the statue in her hand.

"Now, ma'am," she said, showing it to Mrs. Philips, "I 'appened to see that 'ere piece in that young woman's work-basket; I wondered at the time what it was, but I 'eld my tongue, which I 'ave no doubt now, ma'am, you will know who 'as broke the statute."

Mrs. Philips waited for no further proof; but burst into a storm of scolding against Ruth for her carelessness and deceit, and finished by telling her to go and pack up her clothes, for in the morning she should depart without a character.

After one earnest but unheeded protestation of her innocence, Ruth left the room, and, with a heavy heart, went into the kitchen. Here Sarah, who had slipped out before, was triumphantly telling her own story to the cook. Now the cook, though rather weak-minded, was a respectable woman, and she certainly liked Ruth better than the London housemaid, and with some anxiety asked Ruth if it was true.

"No, cook, indeed it is not," said Ruth, with a flushing cheek; "and Sarah knows it is not true. You have made this story up against me, Sarah, and I cannot clear

myself; but you know very well that you were in the drawing-room this afternoon, and I was not. How the figure got broken I cannot say; but I am innocent of it."

"And so you would fix it upon me, would you?" said Sarah, quite savagely; to which Ruth made no reply, but cook said,—

"Well, Ruth, if such a misfortune had happened to you, I think you would not have denied it. I cannot judge between you; but I shall tell missis in the morning all that you were doing when she was out, which was nothing but stitching your fingers to the bone for Miss Sophia, who will give you no thanks for it."

"Thank you, cook," said Ruth, sadly; "but I am afraid there is no help for it, unless Sarah would take back her wicked words again. I shall have to go; and I am an orphan, and I have no home." And as Ruth spoke she took a candle, and left the kitchen to go and pack up her things.

Her mind was in a sad ferment when she got upstairs: she had a keen sense of injustice, and she was both sorely wounded and very angry. She began to pull her things off the shelves where they were kept, and packed them hastily in her box, very different from the neat way in which they had been placed when she came. By the time she had nearly filled her box, her irritation was much subdued, and, as it generally happens, she then became more conscious of it; and when she raised her hand to reach her Bible, she drew it back again as if unworthy to touch the holy book, and, shutting up her box, she sat down upon it, with her arms folded and her head turned towards the window.

o'clock to receive her wages, "Which I might keep back from you," she added; "but as you have previously behaved pretty well, I shall not do so."

Thus in an hour Ruth must go. Where, she hardly knew; she could not burden the Turners with herself and her disgrace; but where else could she go? She would tell Mr. Elmsley the whole story the first thing, she thought, and if he approved, she would remain at her own cottage until she could procure another place.

Eleven o'clock struck; Ruth knocked at the breakfast-room door, and went in. Mrs. Philips had just put on her most severe aspect, and was about to speak, when a carriage drove up to the door, and the hall bell rang.

"Here is Walter, mamma!" exclaimed Miss Sophia, with an animation quite unusual to her. And Sarah, having quickly answered the summons, that young gentleman, in high spirits, burst into the room.

Mamma! mamma!" he cried, as he was fondly kissed by her, "Mrs. Hall says I am to go again very soon, and Florry gave me this story-book, and——" Here he spied Ruth, who was standing in a quiet, respectful attitude near the other door, and he rushed up to her, and throwing his arms round her, began to drag her about in what he intended to be a very affectionate manner. "Now, Ruthie," he said, "come with me, and read me my story, and I will tell you all about Florry's doll-house. I shall take you with me next time. Shan't she go, ma?"

"Ruth is a very naughty girl," replied Mrs. Philips, sternly; "she has broken the veiled statue in the drawing-room, and I am sending her away; she is going now; so come to me, my love."

"The beautiful lady! Oh, Ruth, did you?" said Walter.

"No, Master Walter," replied Ruth, firmly; "but Sarah has told your mamma that I did."

"Mamma! mamma!" cried Walter, "Ruth did not break it. She shall not go away!" And he held Ruth's hand in a vice-like grasp.

Mrs. Philips looked puzzled; she rarely went against Walter's will; and in this matter had forgotten his probable resistance.

"She shall not go, mamma," he said again. "She did not break my beautiful lady, she loved her too, mamma. I made her kiss its fingers yesterday: didn't you, Ruth?"

This confirmation of her maid's strange story struck Mrs. Philips greatly, and she was still puzzled, when Walter—first saying, with a menacing shake of his little fist, "Don't stir, Ruth"—came up to her, and, exerting all his powers of teasing, coaxing, and lamenting, tried to make his mother promise that Ruth should stay.

This had no effect at first; but at the bottom, Mrs. Philips had a lingering desire that way herself; and when she remembered the many good qualities of her obliging parlour-maid, the probability that she might, after all, be innocent, and the impossibility of distressing her tender little boy, she began to relent, and at last said.

"Well, Ruth, as Master Walter pleads so much for you—a kind-hearted little darling as he is, and as I find you did speak the truth in one respect at least, you need not go to-day. I will keep you a little longer on trial; but remember, it is only on trial,—on the first falsehood or carelessness you shall go."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Ruth, almost overcome with the sudden change; "I will do my best; and thank you too, Master Walter."

Master Walter was dancing about the room in an ecstasy; but he now ran up to Ruth, and declared in triumph that she should go upstairs with him at once. As her mistress made no objection, Ruth gladly obeyed her little tyrant benefactor's wishes, and they left the room. As they crossed the lobby they met Sarah, who stared with astonishment to see Ruth still in the house, and looking so happy and so much as if nothing had happened.

"Ha! ha!" said Walter, making a saucy grimace, as soon as he perceived her—"Ha! ha! Ruth is going to stay in spite of you, you nasty spiteful thing."

"Hush, hush, Master Walter, that is rude," said Ruth, leading him on, and leaving Sarah pale with fear and doubt as to what revelations might have been made.

Although her good name had not been entirely cleared, Ruth did not stop to fret herself about that; she tried to be contented that so far things had turned out so well, and she trusted that time would justify her quite. There was much to gratify her in the sympathy of the household. Cook spoke her mind freely, regardless of the presence of the sulky and uncomfortable Sarah; the young ladies rejoiced that Ruth was not sent away, and told her so; whilst Mr. Philips, when he heard the story, clapped Walter on the back, called him a fine fellow, and gave him half a crown, to do what he liked with.

Ruth's natural desire to be quite cleared was not long in being gratified. A few weeks only of cheerful toil

and patient endurance of Sarah's petty persecutions, passed away, and that unprincipled woman committed an act of theft, which she failed to conceal, or throw upon another, and she was taken away in the custody of a policeman, after confessing, in the vain hope of escaping punishment, many other faults, and amongst them the breaking of the veiled statue, of which she had been tempted to throw the blame upon Ruth, by the silent reproach that good girl's honest life conveyed to her. Ruth's last words to her were kind and forgiving; and much as she rejoiced in her innocence being proclaimed, she yet had room in her thankful heart for sincere pity for the miserable Sarah.

CHAPTER IV.

“Sun of my soul! Thou Saviour dear!
It is not night if Thou be near;
Oh, may no earth-born cloud arise,
To hide Thee from Thy servant’s eyes.”—KEBLE.

A RESPECTABLE young woman was soon hired in Sarah’s place, and Ruth’s comfort much increased. The calm that followed was, however, soon broken by a most unexpected interruption.

One morning, to her great surprise, a letter came for Ruth, forwarded to her from Haverleigh. Ruth rarely wrote or received letters, and this one she turned over and over again, wondering from whom it could be. The postmark was London, and it was directed to “Miss Benson, Haverleigh,” in an unknown, but bold and good handwriting.

With some curiosity, Ruth broke the seal, and found that the letter was from her uncle Martin. From it she learned that none of hers had reached her aunt Sarah, because she had removed, two years before, to London, and her address was not known at the post-office. Mrs. Martin had only heard a few days before the news of her sister’s death, and the desolate condition of her orphan niece, from one of the Haverleigh people, who had called at the shop; and her husband now wrote, in both their names, to offer Ruth a home. As she read, various emotions were roused in Ruth’s bosom. The mention of her parents, the sympathy for

the trial so long passed through, awakened sleeping sorrow, and she paused awhile before she could finish the kind letter. She had never known her aunt; a coolness, arising from some money matters, had taken place between the husbands, and stopped all intercourse; but, on the Bensons' side, this had been much regretted, and Ruth had often heard her mother speak with great affection of her only sister Sarah. How pleasant it would be to go to her and tell her this; how sweet once more to sit beside a near and dear relative. Ruth was very glad that her parents' last commands had left her no alternative.

But how to tell the news to Mrs. Philips? Without any vanity, Ruth knew that her mistress would dislike the idea of parting with her very much; for she had been pleased to say, only last week, that Ruth was beginning to improve. After the pains that had been taken with her, Ruth shrank from the seeming ingratitude; but it must be done; so, gathering up her letter and her courage, she went to the storeroom, where she knew that she should find her mistress alone, and with a little trembling in her voice, said, "Please, ma'am, would you be so kind as to read this letter?"

Mrs. Philips frowned; she never liked her servants to receive or answer letters; and truly, if servants write them at improper times, it is no wonder that their mistresses disapprove of their writing altogether. But Mrs. Philips was also curious; so she took the letter and read it through. When she had finished it, folded it up, and given it back to Ruth, she said, in a cold, indifferent way, "Well?"

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"If you please, ma'am," said Ruth, with an inward

quake, "my parents said I was to go and live with my aunt Martin, and I should have gone at first, ma'am, only they never got my letters; so if you please, ma'am, I must go now; I mean, ma'am," she added hurriedly, "as soon as it is convenient to you to spare me."

"It is convenient to me at any time," said Mrs. Philips, in a tone of suppressed passion. "I do not want you—you may go when you like."

"I am very sorry to leave you in this way," began poor Ruth, but she was interrupted by a torrent of reproaches from her mistress, against her ingratitude in wishing to go away just as she had been taught to know one hand from the other; not that Mrs. Philips wished to keep her, she could get as good servants any day; but Ruth had cheated her by coming to get taught, and then by wanting to leave again as soon as she had learnt to be useful. It was an impudent proposal: she wondered that Ruth was not ashamed of coming with it; but at this moment the hall-door bell rang, and Ruth gladly obeyed the angry command to go and answer it.

She admitted some visitors; with them Mrs. Philips went out, and Ruth never had another opportunity during the day to speak again upon the subject. The day after, Walter overheard his mamma detailing to some friends the annoyance she had met with from her presuming parlour-maid; upon which he rushed at once to Ruth, to know if it was true, and to declare that she certainly should not go for anything.

With much trouble Ruth pacified him for the present; but he began again when she waited at luncheon, and revived all Mrs. Philips's dormant anger, and Ruth's situation became more and more unpleasant. After much

consideration, she decided that she would go and seek the advice of her best friends, Mr. and Mrs. Elmsley, and the Turners; and the next morning, in a modest but earnest manner, she asked leave to go for a few hours to Haverleigh.

Mrs. Philips grumbled at the request, but consented, on condition that Ruth should carry a note from her to Mrs. Elmsley, with a proper statement of the case; and bearing this, in the afternoon Ruth walked to what she still called "home." Of course, she first called at Mrs. Turner's, and was warmly welcomed by the good woman, who was in the house alone. She could hardly restrain her expressions of amazement at Ruth's improved appearance; and in truth the latter had grown much during her absence, had become very womanly in her appearance, and was a comely, pleasant-looking girl.

But when Mrs. Turner found that she had come to her in distress, the kind, motherly friend thought of nothing but of listening to and consoling her.

"I shall indeed be sorry to see you go so far," was Mrs. Turner's observation when she had heard it all, "and I can scarcely bid you do what I know your poor mother would have wished; but now, just step on to the Rectory, as you say you have to go, and then when you come back we will have tea and a long talk altogether about the matter."

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Turner," replied Ruth; "but I am afraid it cannot be a very long one, for I have to be back by six, and it is now nearly three."

"Oh, honey," cried Mrs. Turner, "you're never going to walk back all that way this afternoon."

"O, yes, but I am," said Ruth smiling. "Ellen, our

housemaid, said she would lay the cloth for me ; but I must be there in time to wait at dinner."

There was no end to Mrs. Turner's lamentations on hearing this ; and it came out that she expected her son William home that very evening, and she had thought it would have been such a nice surprise for him to have met his old playfellow.

"I am very sorry," said Ruth, and a cloud over her usually bright face told how sorry ; "but it can't be helped. You must tell William how short a time I had." And in a few minutes she proceeded to the Rectory.

Here she first saw her old friend Jane, and afterwards Jane's mistress, who, with her usual kind and considerate manner, listened to Ruth's story. She also read Mrs. Philips's note, and then gave it as her opinion that Ruth was bound to obey her parents' wishes, and to go to her nearest kindred ; but added that she ought to stay with Mrs. Philips until she had found an efficient substitute ; and on Ruth's expressing her doubts as to whether she should be allowed to do this or not, Mrs. Elmsley wrote a note, which she thought might soften Mrs. Philips's feelings towards her, and render Ruth's final leaving her more pleasant.

Then Ruth, after earnestly thanking Mrs. Elmsley, returned quickly to her equally kind though more homely friend, who had provided a good tea for her, and now made her rest and enjoy it, instead of running up to Anne Taylor's, and to one or two other friends', who would think it so strange not to see her.

"You have not time for that, my dear," said Mrs. Turner, "and you have a long walk before you ; so spare

your strength, and I will tell them how it was. Now sup your tea, and then I'll set you to the end of the lane; I only wish that Abraham had been here to give you a lift in the cart."

But Ruth, knowing that her good friend had to prepare a second tea, and did not much like to leave the house, declined the friendly offer of her company for a little way, and, bidding her an affectionate good-bye, set off by herself. With one glance at the old home on the hill, as it stood peeping from under the tall trees that sheltered it, Ruth left the village. Many thoughts were thronging on her mind; but through all was a strong feeling of gratitude for the kind friends that had been given her, and an earnest desire that for this, and the Great Mercy, her life might be a thank-offering.

Her thoughts thus occupied, she reached the place where Mr. Turner had left her the last time she came this way; and naturally giving a glance up the cross-lanes, she saw the well-known light spring-cart, with the spirited young horse. Two figures were sitting in the cart, and Ruth's heart beat with pleasure as she recognized in the slighter, younger one, her old playmate William. The recognition was mutual. "That must be Ruth Benson," said the elder one, as they drove quickly up to her; and almost before the horse was well pulled up, William was out, and had warmly shaken hands with her. How she came to be there alone, where she had been, and where she was going to, had all to be explained; and very sorry they both said they were that they had not been at home earlier in the afternoon.

"Nay," said Ruth, with a merry laugh, "I think I have been very fortunate to meet you here. But I

must not stand talking any longer, for I have to be to Barnsley-fields, and have my bonnet off and a clean apron on by six o'clock."

"Let me set you on a bit," said William, "it's late for you to be walking by yourself."

"No, no," said his father, smiling kindly, "that would never do, and me to get home without you. What would your mother say? No, you shall take the cart and give her a lift as far as Mr. Philips's gate, and I'll be walking on. You'll soon overtake an old man like me."

Ruth tried to object; but she was hurried into the cart, and William got up beside her, with the reins in his hand, before she knew where she was; and after a strict charge from Abraham to his son, to mind the horse's head, for he was tender in the mouth, they set off.

No fear of their going too fast, for, as William said, if they walked the horse, they would still go quicker than Ruth would have done, so in any way there would be time saved; and so long as it was since they had seen each other, it would indeed have seemed a pity to have hurried, for they had so much to tell, pleasant things and sad. It might have been a melancholy conversation, had not Ruth's principle of cheerful hope beamed through everything, even in the account of her dread of Mrs. Philips's anger when she must tell her again that she could not stay with her.

William would not have liked her to remain with Mrs. Philips, for he had heard an exaggerated account of that lady's temper and harshness, from a cousin of his, who had married a young woman who had lived at Barnsley-fields as cook; but still less did he like the idea of Ruth's going to London relatives, that were quite

unknown to her, instead of staying near to friends that were tried and true. His arguments, however, he knew were weak, and it ended in his saying that Ruth was right, as she always was; and as Ruth smiled and shook her head at this flattering speech, she started, for they had reached the gate that opened into Mr. Philips's grounds.

"It wants a quarter to six yet," said William, looking at his large silver watch; "let me drive you a little bit farther and back again. I'll engage that you shall not be too late."

"No, thank you, William," answered Ruth; "I had rather be before my time than run the chance of being after it. Besides, there's your good father walking along in the dust all this time. No, thank you, William, I'll get out now."

"Always the same, Ruth," said William, jumping down,—*"duty before pleasure."*

"My duty is my pleasure," said Ruth, smiling, while William helped her out, as if she had been a princess; and then, as he shook hands with her, answered in a lower tone,—*"Yes, Ruth, I know it is; and I know, too, how it comes that your duty is your pleasure, and please God, it shall be the same with me."*

Ruth gave him one earnest look of gratified feeling, but she did not speak again, and they parted; Ruth, with her heart in a glow of joy and thankfulness, making her way quickly towards the house, and William, after he had slowly shut the gate behind her, leaning on it, and looking after the neat figure until a turn in the road hid her from his sight, then got into the cart again, and drove off at full speed to overtake his kind, indulgent father.

When Ruth appeared at dinner, neat, quiet, and steady as usual, her mistress made no remark upon her punctual return; but she felt more vexed at the prospect of losing so good a servant. She received and read Mrs. Elmsley's note without a word; but the next morning she startled Ruth by turning round to her, and saying sharply,—

“Well, have you given up this ridiculous notion yet, or not?”

“If you please, ma'am,” answered Ruth, “my friends think it is proper that I should go to my aunt; but if you will allow me, ma'am, I will stay here until you have got some one you like in my place.”

“You are very kind, indeed,” said Mrs. Philips, scornfully; “but let me tell you that I have already heard of a young woman who will suit me; so you had better get ready to go directly.”

“To-day, ma'am?” faltered Ruth.

“No, not to-day, you impertinent creature,” said her angry mistress; “how could I let you go to-day, do you think?”

“I beg your pardon, ma'am,” began Ruth, meekly.

“But mamma,” interrupted Miss Sophia, “what shall we do about Walter? he declares she shall not go.”

“A mere childish fancy,” said her mother, with disdain; but in a different tone she added, “Walter is going to stay with your aunt Nesbit for a few days, on the fourteenth; so you can stay till that time, Ruth. As the dear child has taken up this strange idea, it will be as well to avoid exciting him.”

“Thank you, ma'am,” said Ruth, much relieved.

“But mind,” added her mistress, “that you don't go

and talk to Master Walter about it, for the pleasure of seeing that he does not like your going."

"I will not mention it, ma'am," said Ruth; and she went away, on the whole well pleased that the affair was so far settled.

The fortnight that she remained at Barnsley-fields was a busy one: early and late was she at work, either in giving every article that lay in her department,—plate, linen, crockery, and glass,—a thorough polishing and looking over, or in finishing the large quantity of sewing that the Miss Philipsses, as well as their mamma, wished to get out of Ruth's ready fingers whilst she stayed.

With the greatest difficulty she managed to get a few lines written to her aunt, to thank her for her kind offers, and to accept them, and to ask for some further directions about her removal; but the fourteenth arrived without her having received any answer to this note.

On this day Master Walter, under the protection of an old servant who had been sent for him, departed on his visit. He had declared that none but Ruth should go with him, but his mamma said she could not possibly spare her, and at last contrived to dissuade him from it; and, to further pacify him, made him a present of a large box of sweetmeats, part of which he immediately forced on Ruth, and then, kissing her with hearty affection, ordering her to be down at the gate next Thursday to receive him, and consoling her by declaring that he meant to be a very good boy, he at last consented to leave her quietly.

It was quite a sorrow to poor Ruth to look her last upon the endearing, though much-indulged child, who had learnt to love her so much, and she retired to com-

plete her packing with regret. She was also sorry to leave the young ladies, who had latterly been much kinder to her, and when she went to receive her wages, she ventured to express this feeling.

"It is too late now, Ruth," was Mrs. Philips's only answer; "you have thrown away a good situation, and I hope you may not soon repent it."

Miss Philips and Miss Sophia, however, stood in the passage as she passed to say, "Good-bye, Ruth; I hope you may like London:" and all the servants cried, as they wished her well; and when Ruth quitted her first and last place of service, it was with feelings of deep gratitude for the care and kindness that she had received there.

When Ruth reached Haverleigh, and arrived at Mrs. Turner's, where it had been arranged she was to stay, she found a letter waiting from her uncle. It spoke of their readiness to receive her, and said that the sooner she came the better; for her aunt, who had been ill for several months, was worse than usual, and, with their young children, they should be quite thankful for the help that Ruth had said she hoped to be.

"I am sure, honey," said Mrs. Turner, when she had heard the letter, "it is but a dull look-out for you."

"Oh no," answered Ruth; "I am sorry indeed to hear that Aunt Sarah is so poorly; but still it is nice to see my way so plain before me, to know that they really want me, and that I may be useful to them."

"And there is that in it," said Mrs. Turner, "as William says, you have the knack of picking out the best of everything; but now, when shall you have to go, my dear?"

"As soon as possible, I think," said Ruth; "I should

have liked well to have had a few days here, to see the old places and old friends, and particularly one Sunday, that I might go to church once more ; but after what my uncle says, I think I had rather go at once."

In the midst of Mrs. Turner's lamentations, her husband Abraham came in ; and when he heard what they were talking about, he jumped up again, and said it was a most singular thing that Stephen Wilkins had just been telling him that he was going to a fair somewhere near Derby, or Leicester, the next day but one, and if Ruth must really be off so soon, Stephen would be good company for her half-way to London.

Mrs. Turner groaned. Next day but one—it was too soon ; but the opportunity was not to be neglected, and it was settled she should go. Ruth sat down to tell her uncle what time she should arrive, and Joseph went out to prepare Stephen for taking good care of Ruth Benson, who was going to London. So grand a journey was rarely known in Haverleigh, and when Ruth went out in the evening to see Anne Taylor, her canary, and the schoolmistress, the children stopped their play to stare at her, and seemed to wonder that her manner was so little changed, and that she still had a pleasant smile and a kind word for all.

The next day she got her things ready, and good Mrs. Turner busied herself in making a pile of short cakes for Ruth to take with her for the children, and a large plum-loaf ; for London bread was next to poison, she had heard. Her only regret was, that it might have spoiled Ruth's clothes, or she would have also made for her one of the good pork-pies for which she was so famed.

By the afternoon the boxes were all packed and

corded ; and Mrs. Turner put on her best black bonnet and her tartan shawl, that she might walk with Ruth round the village to bid everything and every one good-bye.

Many were the houses that they visited, from the pleasant rectory to the single room that was occupied by a poor sick dressmaker, who had been at school with Ruth, and blind old Peggy Blandy's cottage, where Ruth had often shed the purest, brightest light, by reading to her of the Sun of Righteousness. When these visits had been made, Mrs. Turner began to fidget about making tea, and said she would go home ; but that if Ruth liked to go a little farther, she was welcome, only to mind and be in by five o'clock.

This was just what Ruth desired, and thanking Mrs. Turner, she gladly turned aside to climb the hill that led to the cottage that had been for so many years her happy home.

The day before, she had been to see the young couple who rented it of her, and the inside looked so changed that she did not care to enter it again ; so, after a few minutes' pause, during which her memory was busy, she went farther up the hill, and only turned when she reached the lane that led along the high ground that rose above the village.

How lovely was the prospect on that sunny April day. Close underneath was the pretty village ; every roof and chimney was well known to Ruth, and linked with some neighbourly feeling ; and at one end of it the church, so dear, half hid amongst the trees that divided the churchyard from the garden of the rectory. Beyond, as far as the eye could reach, lay an expanse of rich open country—fresh green fields, hedges newly clothed with verdure,

and trees just opening into leaf; and, winding across the plain until, from a narrow silver thread, it was lost entirely, flowed the river, fresh and beautiful in any season; and above all was the pure sky, high and blue, speaking of heaven and eternity; a few light clouds that floated in it, some white, some grey, some deep in colour, but all full of sunlight to the eye that could distinguish it, might signify the little troubles and the bitter sorrows, the light chastenings and the heavy trials, that lie between the earth and that eternal home. At least, so they spoke to Ruth; and with a prayer that the sunlight might never fail her, she pursued her way along that flowery lane, where the primroses and violets were shedding forth their sweet perfume. Stooping now and then to pick a few of these long-loved flowers, she walked on until the lane, sloping down to the other end of the village, ended at a little gate which led into the churchyard.

Here was Ruth's last visit to be paid, and across this peaceful "acre," where generations of the villagers had been laid to rest, she gently trod a narrow path that led her to the spot where she had left her parents, and here, under the shade of a spreading sycamore, she knelt beside their grave. "I am alone," she murmured, and the tears rolled down her cheeks. "I will not leave thee nor forsake thee:" with Almighty comfort to her memory came these words; and, after one short prayer for life-enduring faith, she rose, and after adding from the grave some daisies to her other flowers, she pressed them to her lips, and walked away.

CHAPTER V.

"Farewell for her th' ideal scenes so far ;
Yet not farewell her Hope."—KEBLE.

Soon after day-break the next morning, Ruth's boxes were placed in the tax-cart, and she herself was ready for her departure.

"I will write soon, and tell you how I'm getting on," said she, after thanking Mrs. Turner for all her kindness to her.

"Ay, be sure you do, honey," said that good woman, wiping her eyes with her clean white apron ; "and mind this, Ruth,—if you should not find your aunt's home comfortable, as your mother expected it would be, you have always another ready for you here, and just you come back again."

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Turner," answered Ruth, as she warmly pressed her kind friend's hand, "so I will, if it should be very bad,—at least, unless I am wanted much, I mean."

"Ay, ay," said Mrs. Turner ; "but, now, don't go and harass yourself with the children, and come back looking pale and thin, like Molly Simpson's niece, that was brought from London in a deep decline."

"Pray do not fear that for me," said Ruth, with a bright, cheerful smile,—and certainly the rosy, healthful girl that Abraham was helping up into the cart was as unlike as possible to Molly's poor sallow niece ; but

Mrs. Turner only shook her head ; and as they drove away, she muttered to herself,—

“ But I'll send to look after you : Margaret's girl shall not pine away, neglected, in far-off parts ; and I think I know somebody that would not be very sorry to be sent on such an errand.”

And, somewhat comforted, the good creature watched them turn the corner, returned the last smile and wave of the hand, and then went back into the house.

Before long, Ruth had reached the station, had seen her boxes placed in the London van, had shaken hands with Joseph Turner, and had got into a third-class carriage with the stout butcher, who was to be her escort half the way.

The railway whistle gave its frantic shriek, and slowly the train moved out of the station, through the outskirts of the town, past a tall smoky manufactory, long rows of low brick cottages, and an old hospital, then into the open country, where, as the speed increased, the fresh pure air blew in at the openings of the carriage. And now the train moved still more quickly ; fields, trees, and hedges seemed to fly past them ; cows, sheep, and workmen, when there were any, alone stood still, as it seemed, and looked at them.

But very soon the speed began to slacken, and a harsh voice called out some name, that might have been dog or man, or work-basket, for anything Ruth could make out from it, and they stopped beside a sort of well-built shed, where some more passengers were ready to be taken up, and an omnibus was waiting in the road below for those who might get out of the train.

A few minutes were enough for this exchange, and then

the piercing whistle sounded, and they began again to move. Ruth had only been on a railway once before, and that for a very few miles; so all this was new to her.

"You don't seem used to travelling, miss," said a dark-complexioned man, who sat near to her.

"Not so much as you do," growled the fat butcher, without leaving Ruth time to answer.

Stephen Wilkins had seemed to be asleep, but on hearing Ruth addressed, he immediately replied for her in such a tone that the little dark man ventured on no further observation. The good-natured, though uncouth Stephen, then roused himself, and began to talk to Ruth a little, pointed out to her the fine houses or churches that they passed, and told her what county they were going through, and what kind of grazing-land it was; and talked about those friends they had left behind in a way that might show that, if the pretty modest-looking country girl were not his daughter, she was at least under his especial charge. At several stations there was a change of passengers, but they were mostly for short distances, and the greater number of those who were in the carriage when they started still remained.

There were two soldiers in the opposite corner, who laughed and talked together in under-tones; there was a stout man and his thin wife, who were always squabbling about a basket of provisions that they had brought with them; and there was a tall haggard-looking man, dressed in decent mourning, with a little boy of about five or six years old beside him, the father bending over the child's pale face with anxious care, the boy—he might be motherless—nestling close up to him, as if he were now his sole protector.

Opposite to the wifeless man and orphan child sat a couple to whom such sorrows were as yet an untold tale—before whom life was full of unmixed brightness. In her new clothes, her green stuff dress, her many-coloured Paisley shawl, and, more than all, in the fresh white ribbons on her clean straw-bonnet, the young bride might be discovered; whilst it was not difficult to trace in the good-looking husband, with his independent, happy, careless manner, the young mechanic, who had saved up his wages carefully, that his Lucy might have a pleasant holiday in “Lunnon” town.

They had smiles to spare for every one, and Lucy had a gingerbread for the fretful child, to keep him from plaguing the weakly mother, whose hands were already full enough with a teething baby, and a heavy basket that she seemed afraid to trust upon the floor.

The little dark man next to Ruth gave many threatening glances to this group, and when the baby cried that weary, hopeless cry that even a mother cannot always hush, he muttered oaths that made Ruth creep closer to her guardian Stephen. But Stephen had to leave her soon. Before long they reached a station where they might stay for a quarter of an hour, and here Stephen took Ruth into the refreshment-room, and made her eat a good dinner, with a cup of tea to it; for, as he said, “The stuff you eat out of parcels never seems to do you the good that a plateful sitting to it comfortable does;” and when his hospitable heart had seen her satisfied, he took her back to the carriage, that he might see her safely placed before he quitted her.

And when she had got in, Stephen looked round and round, from some farmers who were disputing loudly

about turnips, to the sickly woman with her heavy burdens, giving the dark man a fierce scowl as he passed him under review, until at last his eyes rested on the young couple we have mentioned, and he immediately put on his blandest manner, and said, "A fine day for travelling!"

Both smiled, and answered, "Very fine."

"Ay, it is a fine season," he pursued, proceeding to make friends with them in what he thought a most able manner. "You'll be going to the far end, may-be?"

"To London," said the two young people, smiling still.

"A wonderful place that is," pursued Stephen; a remark which was also smilingly agreed to by both, "though," as the young man added, "Lucy need not say so, for she has never been there yet."

"No more has this young woman," answered Stephen, pointing across to Ruth. "You, perhaps, wouldn't mind her sitting over against you there; she'd be more comfortable."

With pleasure they made room for her beside them, and just then the bell rang, so Stephen bid his charge good-bye, and then shook hands with the young man and with Lucy, saying, as he did so, "My best wishes go with you both;" upon which they smiled and thanked him.

"You'll may-be be so kind as give an eye to her," added Stephen, looking back after he had moved away. "There's two of you, you know. Her uncle is to meet her at the station."

"Oh! yes, we'll take care of her," they both replied. The "we" had a happy and an honest sound, and Ste-

phen left the station, satisfied that he had done his very best for that good and bonnie lass Ruth Benson.

The young man, whose name was Andrew, and his smiling bride, did not accept the charge of Ruth without taking care to fulfil it. They made themselves so pleasant all the way, that Ruth never felt it long or tedious. Besides talking to them, she could not be near the burdened mother without offering to relieve her; and first she nursed the baby awhile, and then she held the basket, and at last she made such friends with the fretful little girl, that the poor child moaned herself to sleep in her arms, and lay there until they were approaching London. That is a moment of excitement to every inexperienced traveller.

First there is the long, strange white haze in the distance to be wondered at; you draw nearer, and beside you are long rows of small houses; but you are not in London yet. Another busy little town appears, many lights may be distinguished, and you seem to be very near; but a tunnel soon hides everything, and after that you are whisked for some distance between deep embankments before the slackening pace gives notice of your arrival.

“And your uncle is to meet you here, then?” asked Lucy, in a low tone of Ruth.

“Yes,” replied the latter; “at least, that is, if he can leave my aunt, who is ill. If he is not there, I am to get a cab. I have the address here.”

“You must look sharply about you when we get out,” said Andrew, “for there is always a fine bustle; but as we are quite independent,—nobody waiting for us, eh, Lucy?—we will see after you, so keep close to her. Now then.”

The train had stopped, the doors were opened, the people all pressed out of the carriages, our friends among the rest, and now began that strange bustle that so bewilders a country person in a London station.

Ruth would have looked about her, but Lucy plucked her by the sleeve, and told her to follow them, and to look very sharply about her, for Andrew said there were always pickpockets in crowds like this. Then they led the way to the second-class waiting-room, where Ruth's uncle had said that he would meet her; but no one was there who could possibly be her uncle, so, having found their luggage, they all got into a cab together; for both Andrew and Lucy declared that they should certainly not lose sight of Ruth until she was safe with her relations.

Ruth thanked them warmly; but she was interrupted by Lucy's delight as they drove through a street full of shops brilliantly lighted up. Other streets followed, more dark and quiet; but Ruth exclaimed with wonder, when they turned a corner, and passed a mansion with a front of plate-glass—one blaze of light.

"Ah!" said Andrew, with all the superior wisdom of one who had been in London before, "you think that is a very grand place, don't you? We have some almost as grand in Manchester; but I tell you, Lucy, if I ever entered one of those, I should never dare to look at you again."

"What is it?" asked Lucy, in a frightened tone, drawing near at the same time to Andrew, as if to hold him back from going now.

"It is a gin-palace," replied Andrew; "a place where men and women, and children—ay, even infants at the

breast—are fed at an easy rate, with a poison which destroys their health, breaks up their happiness, leads them into untold crime, and ruins them both in body and soul! These fine buildings are the curse of the greatest city in the world.”

Andrew was a member of a mechanics' institute. He had improved his opportunity; had read and thought much, and he could speak well. Lucy had heard him before express himself in this manner, but she now listened with greater pride than ever, and glanced eagerly at Ruth, to observe if she shared in the admiration that she thought everybody must feel for her young husband.

After this they had not much talk, for they were rattling through the noise and traffic of the Strand and Fleet-street. From Fleet-street they passed into some that were quiet enough, and before long the cab stopped, and Ruth knew that her journey was at an end.

She looked out of the window. They were standing before a small dingy shoe-shop, but the glass-door was closed, and no one seemed to be aware of their approach.

“Shall I knock, miss?” asked the cabman.

Ruth was puzzled, and looked at her new friends.

“Perhaps you would like me to go in with you?” said Andrew, good-naturedly. “It must be the right place,” he added, looking up at the sign of “MARTIN, BOOT AND SHOE MAKER,” above the door.

“Yes,” said Ruth, rather sorrowfully, “it must be the place;” and she kissed Lucy, and got out after Andrew.

Andrew opened the shop-door, and went in; Ruth followed him. In a corner near the window sat a pale overgrown boy, bending over a book. He looked up as they entered, and Ruth fancied—it might be only fancy

—that there was something familiar in his face, and she went nearer to him and said,—

“ I’m your cousin Ruth ; didn’t you expect me ? ”

“ Oh,” said the boy, with a smile half of shyness, half of pleasure, “ we have thought you’d be a-comin’ all this afternoon.”

At this moment, a tall, miserable-looking man came into the shop, from a door at the side of it, and the boy, turning to him, said,—

“ Father, here’s cousin ! ”

“ How d’ye do, my dear ? ” said the man, coming forward and shaking hands with Ruth in a manner that was not uncordial, though it was melancholy. “ I wish I could have come to meet you, but I couldn’t leave. How did you manage ? ”

“ I met with very kind friends,” answered Ruth, turning to Andrew, who added, “ She was put into our care at Derby, and we thought we should like to see her to the far end ; but my wife is waiting for me, so I must wish her good-bye now.” Andrew held out his hand, and Ruth shook it warmly, thanking him for all his kindness, and in this her uncle joined her.

“ Lucy and I will come and see you, if we can, before we leave London,” said Andrew, nodding with a cheerful smile, as he left the shop.

CHAPTER VI.

“Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end of way ;
But to ask that each To-morrow
Find us further than To-day.”—LONGFELLOW.

As soon as he had gone, her uncle asked Ruth to go up stairs, and he led the way through the side-door by which he had come in himself. As they went up the steep, narrow staircase, Ruth was sensible of a close, stifling smell, which, added to the dizziness of travelling, made her scarcely able to see or hear.

“It is a melancholy house you’ve come to, my dear,” said her uncle, in a mournful voice, as he walked up stairs before her; “but we must make the best of it. Your aunt is bad, very bad,” he repeated sadly.

“I am sorry to hear it,” said Ruth; but he went on talking as if he had not heard her.

“And the poor children, they do badly without her. And Jessie’s very cross with them.”

As he said this, they heard from up-stairs, a sharp voice saying, in a south-country tongue, quite strange to Ruth, “Be quiet, now;” but as the words were accompanied by a sounding slap, they had the reverse of the desired effect, and were followed by a loud, passionate scream.

“Hush, hush, children,” said the father, pushing open a door at the top of the staircase. Ruth went into a good-sized room, half kitchen, half parlour, she supposed, in fact, the living-room of the family. It was dimly

lighted by a thin dip-candle, set up crooked in an old japanned candlestick, that stood upon a table in the middle of the room, which was covered with dirty oilcloth. A piece of carpet lay beneath the table, but it was creased up, and exposed the unwashed floor. Another table, a common deal one, stood between the dingy, uncurtained, unblinded windows; and on this table it would seem that Jessy was washing up the tea-things, for a bowl of water stood before her, and over the table were scattered a variety of handle-less mugs, and cracked cups and saucers; besides an old metal tea-pot, with the lid tied on by a piece of string. On the floor beside her stood a kettle, and it was for touching this black object that the slap had been inflicted on a tiny girl, who was now sitting crying on a little stool. A ragged hearth-rug lay before the battered fender, and on it sat a boy about eight years old, looking at the smouldering cinders that half filled the grate; and also on the rug, with his legs stretched out, to try and kick the little one, lay another boy, much younger.

It takes a long time, and many words to describe the room, even thus imperfectly; but the whole, even to the strange medley of pictures on the walls—from a bad, torn print of a fat beast to the little picture of a Madonna that hung between some black profiles of the family—was taken in at once by Ruth, and the impression made her sad and pitiful.

“Jessy, do let that child alone,” said her father, in a querulous tone, as he came into the room; “she will waken her mother.”

“Mother is awake,” said the boy, who sat before the fire, speaking in a calm, decided tone.

"Did you hear her move, Davy? Then I must go. Here, Jessy, here is your cousin."

"Oh lawk!" cried Jessy, turning round; "have you come at last? We've been expecting you all the afternoon, and we'd given you up now," and as Jessy spoke she cast a sort of disconsolate look at the tea-things, then picked up the towel that she had been wiping them with, gave a shove with her foot to the youngest boy as she passed him, saying, "Get up, Ted," and set a chair for Ruth near the fire. "Ain't you tired?" she continued, as Ruth was shaking hands with the boys, and putting down her shawl and umbrella. "We've had tea, but I'll make you some fresh. I've had everything to do since mother's been ill; and the children are so cross, there is no a-bearing them. Do be quiet, Rosa. She is so fretful." And Jessy took up the little girl with a rough shake, and held her in her arms.

All this seemed very confidential; but she had given a searching look at her cousin, and Ruth's beaming smile in answer had opened her heart for a moment.

"Will you let me take the baby till you finish washing up," said Ruth, in her soft though homely tones; "you know I have come to live with you, so you must tell me what I can do to help you."

"Oh dear," said Jessy, looking half inclined to cry, "I am glad you've come, but you don't know what it is. Rosa's always crying; then there's the shop to mind, and mother so ill, and everything to do. We used to keep a girl; but when she left us, father said we could not afford to keep another."

"I must be the girl, then," said Ruth, smiling. "Do

you think I'll do. But first of all, had I not better take off my bonnet? then I can help you better."

"Oh!" was Jessy's answer, "you've got such a nice bonnet, and I'm sure there's not a place you can put it in, for the boys throw their things anywhere, and father has all the presses nearly to put shoes in."

"I can keep my bonnet in one of my boxes," said Ruth, cheerfully; "but now will you show me where I am to sleep?"

"To be sure," answered Jessy, looking rather bewildered; "but we must take Rosa, and then very likely Ted will throw the kettle over. He did once, and scalded Davy."

"It was Tom that pushed me," muttered Ted, still lying on the hearth-rug with his large eyes fixed on the stranger, whilst the boy on the footstool seemed to be listening earnestly, but did not move.

"Never mind," said Ruth; "if you will tell me where to go, I can find the room, perhaps, without taking you away."

"Well," said Jessy, relieved, "it's just upstairs, you can't miss it; there's two rooms like these two, mother's and this, and one of them has beds in, that's ours; the other hasn't, only a crib for Davy and a mattress on the floor for Tom and Ted. Since mother's been ill, father said I was to make things a bit comfortable for you; so I would, but I'm sure I haven't had time. You can take that candle."

This was not very encouraging; however, Ruth took the japanned candlestick off the table, carrying it very carefully, that the candle might not fall out, and went upstairs. The first room she went into was clearly, from

Jessy's description, the one occupied by the boys, so Ruth proceeded to the next. In this there were two beds—one hung with dyed blue moreen, the other without any hangings, and a soiled patched coverlet on each. Two broken chairs, that had once been gilt and painted, a tumble-down old washing-stand, and a chest of drawers, completed the furniture of the room, with the exception of a rickety little table that stood in one of the windows, and which held a good-sized looking-glass, or at least what might have been so, only half of it was broken out; a dirty comb and brush, a three-cornered red pincushion, a piece of narrow black velvet, and a coral necklace.

Ruth set her candle down upon the chest of drawers, and looked about her. Jessy might well say there was not a place that Ruth could put her bonnet in; there was not a place that she could put it on, without risk of soiling it; so she went downstairs to see if she could not have her smaller box brought up.

Tom looked surprised when his cousin appeared in the shop.

"I want one of my boxes," said she; "will you be so kind as to help me up with it?"

"I must not leave the shop," said Tom; "can't Jessy help you?"

"She is busy," replied Ruth, "but I think I can manage by myself;" so saying, with her strong and willing arm she lifted up the neatly-papered trunk, and carried it upstairs. In this box she contrived to put her black straw bonnet within her Sunday one; she then folded up her woollen shawl, washed her hands and face,

smoothed her hair, put on a clean white apron, and went downstairs with a determination to set the candle up straight the first thing. This was soon done by the help of a bit of newspaper she had brought down with her for the purpose, and then she asked Jessy if she could see her aunt.

"I don't know," said Jessy. "The doctor said yesterday she was to be kept very quiet. Whenever I go in almost, mother sends me back again to mind the children, or get something ready for father,—she never lets me stay hardly."

Here little Rosa set up a great scream; so Ruth sat down on a low chair, and taking the child on her lap, began to talk to her in that pleasant smiling way that children love. Then Jessy began to bustle about again; she was making tea for Ruth. The kettle had been restored to the fire, and a teacup and saucer placed upon the table. To this preparation she now added a half loaf of bought bread, and a bit of butter, which seemed much the worse for keeping.

Whilst Ruth was talking to the baby girl, she heard a low breathing beside her, and then she felt a gentle hand touching her shoulder, her head, and feeling down her arm. She was startled, and turned quickly round, when Jessy laughed, and said, "It's only Davy; he's blind, you know, and he likes to feel people that he may know them again, he says."

Ruth's startled look was quickly changed for one of the deepest pity, and silently she gave her hand to the boy, who felt it all over, and then, as if satisfied, groped his way back to the hearthrug, procured his stool, and



fetching it with him, placed himself by the side of Ruth, took hold of her hand again, and said, "Tell me, too, about the railway train."

But Master Ted's jealousy was roused by this; he did not like to be left out, and he came pushing up to Ruth so rudely, that Davy rebuked him, and Rosa began to cry. With some trouble Ruth arranged them quietly, and was beginning her story again, when Jessy, having finished her preparations, called on the children to leave their cousin, and let her come to her tea. They were so unwilling that Ruth said she would wait awhile, and she was still sitting in the midst of them, when her uncle, who had been shutting up the shop, came in with Tom and an elderly benevolent-looking gentleman, whom she rightly concluded to be the doctor.

"Let us have your candle, Jessy, the one in your mother's room is going out," said her father.

Ruth hastily put Rosa on the floor and stood up, still holding Davy by the one hand, and the little girl by the other. The doctor's eye rested upon her as she stood, like a fresh spring-flower, in that dingy room.

"That is my wife's niece from the country," said John Martin—"she has only come to-night."

"Indeed!" said the doctor; "she looks as if she could help you to nurse. See if you cannot get those windows open to-morrow," he added, speaking to her, "and let a little fresh air into the room, or you will soon find, to your cost, that you have left the country."

"He is such a queer man, that," said Jessy, when the doctor had left the room; "always talking about air, fresh air. They say he's awful clever, and kind too

where he takes ; but I know he spoke very sharp to me the other day, 'cause I hadn't poured the medicine out quite exact."

"One should be very careful about medicine," said Ruth ; "an overdose might do such harm. But now I think I will have my tea. When I have done, Davy, I will tell you another story."

She had soon done, for there was nothing very tempting in the cold-drawn tea, the dry bread, and the dirty butter, especially when it was served up in such a slovenly way, and had to be eaten in such a stifling atmosphere.

"You must let me wash up this time, Jessy," said she, when her short meal was over ; "but I must have some boiling water to make the cups quite clean. Have you any wood ?"

"In that closet," replied Jessy, pointing to a door in the corner ; "but I am sure the water's warm enough."

By this time, however, Ruth had found the chips, and was now raking the ashes out of the bottom of the grate. She then drew the embers together, put some chips lightly on them, and a large cinder or two over them to catch the flame. Then with an old brush that she found at the same time, and a shovel, she contrived to clear the hearth of a mass of ashes ; and, to her surprise, was relieved of them by Tom, who had been watching her all the time, and now said,

"I'll carry these away for you."

"You never did that for me," said Jessy, pettishly ; "but of course not, I have to do everything."

Then Ruth set the kettle on, and, while it was boiling, she put the fender and fire-irons quite straight, smoothed

the carpet, arranged the chairs, rubbed down the tables, and managed to give the room quite a tidy air.

"I declare, you're just like Mrs. Watkins, in Charlotte-street," said Jessy, rather scornfully; "she likes everything always in apple-pie order."

"So do I," replied Ruth, smiling; "but I can't do it properly to-night, because I have my stuff gown on. Now, where can I wash my hands?"

"There's a bowl," said Jessy, looking about her rather doubtfully.

"Not where I am going to wash my tea-things, surely?" said Ruth, with a smile. "Where do you wash your hands and the boys?"

"Tom and father have a basin in the workshop," answered Jessy, "and there is one in our room."

"I'll run up there," said Ruth: and up she went, and soon returned, bringing with her one out of a store of home-spun towels that Mrs. Turner's forethought had made her put in her box.

By this time the kettle boiled, and the tea-things were washed up in more clean hot water than they had apparently seen for some time; and then Ruth inquired where they were kept.

"There's the closet," replied Jessy; "but we shall want them again for breakfast, and maybe in the night, for mother often wants a cup of tea."

"But I think I will put them by now," said Ruth, "they will keep cleaner, and be out of the way, and quite as handy to get at. Now, Jessy, is there anything I can do for you?"

"There's the doctor," remarked Jessy, in reply. "You'd better ask him if it would hurt mother to see you."

"So I will," said Ruth; and, stepping to the door as he passed, she dropped a courtesy, and made her request.

"Hurt your aunt? No. I should think you're much more likely to do her good," replied the doctor, in his short rough manner. "Humph!" he added, throwing his experienced eye, with an approving air, round the tidied room. "You'll not neglect the fresh air and cleanliness. Remember that. Hurt her! no, only don't startle her. I suppose she knows you are here?"

"Yes," put in John Martin; "and she wanted to see Ruth, but I waited till you came."

"Well, well, let her go now," said the doctor, going downstairs—then, pausing a moment, he turned round and said, "Hark ye, young woman, mind you walk out a few hundred yards every day with the children. Get into the park when you can, or you will soon wither, for want of pure air. Don't forget, now."

"No, sir," said Ruth, courtesying again, and feeling grateful for the doctor's interest in her.

When her uncle had followed him downstairs, Jessy came out of her mother's room, and said, "She wants you, Ruth." So Ruth went in. This room had a worse smell than the other. It was not badly furnished, but every article had a dirty or neglected look. In a heavy four-post bed, with chintz curtains, lay the invalid, reminding Ruth, at first sight, so strongly of her own dear mother, that she could hardly restrain her tears.

"How d'ye do, my dear?" said the sick woman, putting out her wasted hand. "It is a miserable house you've come to."

"I hope you will soon improve, dear aunt," said Ruth,

sitting down quietly on an old chair beside the bed, "then everything will mend."

"Perhaps I shall," replied her aunt, wiping her eyes. "The doctor says I am better to-night. I am glad you've come. Poor Jessy, she tries to do her best, but it is a heavy burden for her. And your uncle, Ruth, he's quite overdone, what with the shop, and the children, and everything. And then, poor Davy, my poor blind boy. Oh! my dear."

"I will do all I can to help them, aunt," said Ruth. "Do not distress yourself. I am young and strong. I have been accustomed to work, and you may trust me, so do not fret, aunt."

"I'm glad you've come, Ruth," was the answer in a feeble, helpless voice, and in spite of the dirt, the bad smells, and the discomfort, Ruth said too, "I'm glad I've come."

"Mother," cried a little voice at the other side of the bed, "let me stay here."

A sad smile crossed the poor mother's face as her eyes rested on her blind boy. A hand stretched out to meet his was encouragement enough, and Davy stood beside her, quite content.

Ruth and her aunt had some quiet talk, till her uncle came in to say that it was time for the medicine, and seeing Davy, sent him off to bed. Ruth went to the old chest of drawers on which the cup and bottle stood. The cup might have been used unwashed for weeks, so she slipped into the next room, for a nice clean teacup and a spoon, then measured the medicine carefully, and gave it to her aunt.

She soon fell into a doze, and on a sign from her uncle,

who was sitting by the bed, Ruth went away. She found Jessy, in the other room, upon her knees before the fireplace, by turns blowing at the dying cinders and scolding Tom for not attending to the fire.

"Now," she said, "if father wants a drop of warm water in the night, he can't have it, and Rosa's crying all this time upstairs, because she's left alone."

"I'll make the fire up, Jessy," said Ruth, "if you want to go back to Rosa."

"Oh, Ruth," said Jessy, "you must be tired, and you will want some supper too."

"I'll fetch you a gill of porter, if you like," said Tom, who was sitting in his usual moody way.

"No, thank you, Tom," said Ruth. "I do not need any supper."

"You had better go now, Jessy."

"But father said I was to see you comfortably off to bed," said Jessy. "Won't you come now?"

"If I can't do anything for aunt," replied Ruth, "I will follow you as soon as I have made up the fire."

So Jessy, still grumbling, because Rosa would not go to sleep without her, left the room, quickened in her movements by a louder squall, for which the child was rewarded, when Jessy got upstairs, with the usual slap, by way of composing her slumbers.

With a few shavings, chips, and a fresh coal or two, lightly laid together, Ruth once more made the fire burn. Tom fetched her some water from a pump in the little yard behind the house, and she filled the kettle; and on Tom's assuring her that his father never let any one sit up, and could get anything for himself that he might want, she bid him "good night."

"I'll get Jem, that takes the shutters down next door, to help me upstairs with your large box to-morrow morning," said Tom.

"Thank you," replied his cousin; "and Tom, I must be up soon. What time do you get up?"

"When St. Martin's clock strikes six," said Tom; "shall I waken you? but that is so soon for girls."

"I wish you would—thank you, Tom. Good night."

When Ruth had groped her way upstairs in the dark, for she had left Tom the candle, she found both her cousins were asleep. The sight reminded her that she too was very tired, and hastily undressing, she said her prayers with a thankful heart, and was soon, like the others, fast asleep.

CHAPTER VII.

“Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.”—G. HERBERT.

“WHY, Ruth, you’re not going to get up now,” yawned Jessy, the next morning. “It is quite dark.”

“Not quite,” answered Ruth, who always seemed to be wide awake. “I like to get up soon, and I shall have a great deal to do, so I asked Tom to call me. Won’t you get up too?”

“Not I,” said Jessy; “none of us get up so soon but Tom, and he likes to do what nobody else does.”

So Ruth dressed herself with her usual care and quickness, and then said her prayers, and learnt a verse of one of the Psalms, and by this time a bit of pleasant sunshine was trying to come through the dirt-encrusted panes.

“You had better get up, Jessy; you must allow that it is not dark now.”

“I will soon,” said Jessy, turning over again, and muttering, “I cannot think what you are going to do, so early in the morning.”

But whilst she was speaking, her cousin had gone down into the desolate room below. It smelt more close and unwholesome than the night before, and the first thing she did was to try and open one of the windows. But neither of them would yield to her strongest efforts. They were jammed tight with dust and long

disuse. So she went down to Tom and told him her trouble.

He stared to see her, and said, "They don't open the windows."

"But the doctor said we must have fresh air in the room," persisted Ruth.

So Tom, looking very sulky, though really proud of being appealed to, found a chisel, and went upstairs with her. It took him a long time, but he persevered, and at length one window, the one opposite the door, was thrown open, and a current of fresh air rushed into the room, searching every nook and cranny, as if bent on a voyage of discovery, and delighted to find itself in an unknown land.

"Now, Tom," said Ruth, "I am going to make up the fire, and I should like to sweep the room, but I cannot find a proper brush."

"We had a sweeping-brush," said Tom, "but our girl broke it, and Teddy took the handle for some nonsense or other; but we have one for the shop that I could lend you."

"Ay, do," said Ruth, and Tom quickly appeared with it, saying at the same time, "What do you bother yourself for, why not let Jessy do it?"

"Jessy has a deal to do—more than she can manage," replied Ruth, "so I may as well begin at once to take some off her hands, and I can do it best before the children are about. Have you any pipe-clay?"

"Think not," answered Tom, who was sparing of his words. "There's a bowl somewhere, that the girl used to keep it in."

"Just run then, Tom, and buy me a pennyworth will

you? and some black lead too. Here is the money, and I will stay in the shop till you come back."

He was soon back, then she set to work again. She first cleared the grate well of all the ashes, and gave them to Tom to take away; then cleaned the fireplace thoroughly, and black-leaded it, washed and whitened the hearth-stone, laid a fresh fire and lighted it. The kettle she also rinsed out and cleaned, and gave a good rubbing to the old fender and the fire-irons. Then Tom and she took the carpet, which had been rolled up during the sweeping of the room, and carried it into the back yard and shook it. She then washed the tables down, and rubbed the chairs, and dusted the shelves, with all the little articles, the children's toys, books, medicine bottles, boxes, and odd things that were upon them, and then she spread the carpet on the middle of the floor, and got Tom to nail it down with a few tacks, making as little noise as possible. Now she arranged the furniture, and then, giving a longing glance to the uncleaned windows, she paused to examine her work.

Tom was a boy of few words, as we have said, and therefore, although he was full of astonishment at the rapid change that had been effected in the once dirty room, now tidy, clean and wholesome, comparatively speaking, he only said,

"I hear Jem next door; I'll go and get him to help me with your box."

Ruth was afraid that the noise would disturb her aunt, but Tom said she was used to the children's rackets, and the lads both put their shoes off, and tried to come up oftly. There was a sort of lobby outside the room upstairs, where Ruth thought her box might stand, at least

for the present, so the boys left it there, and after she had thanked them, they crept downstairs again.

In the bedroom Ruth found a scuffle going on, which she ended by offering to dress Rosa, a proposal which the child accepted with delight. The night before, Ruth had seen, with pity, how much the poor little thing required careful washing, and by dint of bringing up some nice warm water, and by her gentle touch and coaxing, the child was brought to submit quietly to a good scrubbing. Of soap there was none to be seen, but Jessy spoke of a piece somewhere downstairs, and Ruth procured it by the help of her staunch ally, Tom.

When Rosa was washed, straightly dressed, and her pretty yellow hair brushed in curly rings round her clean, fair face, Jessy cried out, in affectionate admiration, "Why, Rosa, what a beauty you are." Upon which Rosa held up her little head with new-born vanity, and trotting to the broken looking-glass, lisped, "Me see."

Ruth held her up, and took that opportunity to impress the advantage of being clean, in a way that the little child could understand and remember.

Meanwhile Jessy, having finished her hasty toilette, had gone into the lumber-place where her little brothers slept, and with sundry rough words had wakened them. The little fellows were soon dressed, then Jessy began to bustle about, and say she must make haste down, or there would be nothing ready for her father.

"I have lighted the fire," said Ruth.

"Oh! have you?" was Jessy's answer, in a not over-well-pleased tone.

"So now, if you will come and show me how, I will help you to make breakfast ready."

Jessy took Rosa in her arms, gave the little beauty, as she called her, a warm kiss, and ran down stairs. Ted and Davy had gone down before her, and the blind boy was now crying out, "Oh! Jessy, Jessy, I am so cold."

"I should think you are, my pet. Who has set the window wide open this way, I wonder?" replied his sister, indignantly.

"I did," said Ruth, quietly. "You know the doctor desired that it might be done, and the air is freshest early in the morning, but I will shut it now."

She did so, and then placing the little stool before the fire, led Davy to it, and tried to warm his little hands in hers.

"It feels like when mother made it, long ago," said Davy, looking up at Ruth with a sweet smile; "and it smells so clean and nice."

This praise was sweet to Ruth, and pleasanter than his sister's half-jealous exclamation.

"Lawk, Ruth, how nice you've put the things!"

But now Jessy went to the cupboard and began in a slovenly way to get out the breakfast things. Soon she stopped to grumble. "Father's forgot to leave the penny out for the milk. Tom will have to go for it without. We can't wait till father gets up."

"I'll lend you one," said Ruth, pulling out her third penny, which Jessy took with a jug to Tom, that he might fetch the usual supply from a neighbouring shop.

The cups and mugs were then set out, some weak tea made, and the old loaf and butter arranged upon the table; Ruth following Jessy's rapid movements with

some quiet changes, which made the things look straight and tidy.

"A bit of this bread would be nicer toasted for your father's breakfast," she remarked.

"Mother likes toast," said Jessy, "but we can't often make it, the fire burns so badly."

"It is a good fire now," said Davy.

"Yes; and you shall hold the toast," said Ruth; and she cut a slice off the loaf, stuck it upon a long fork that she had found among the rubbish in the cupboard and had cleaned, and gave it to him to hold. By the time, the boy with great delight, and with some help from Ruth, had toasted one slice brown, the father came in looking worn and harassed, and as if he had been much disturbed during the night.

What a relief it must have been to him to come into the purified atmosphere of the nicely-tidied room. The fireside was bright and cheerful; on his little stool sat Davy with a most contented face, toasting the second slice of bread; Ted was rolling on the hearth as usual; and Rosa, pretty little Rosa, was standing with her hands behind her, watching Davy's movements. Ruth was near, that she might be ready to save the toast from burning; and Jessy, with a happier look than usual, stood beside the table to be ready to pour out the tea. A smile crossed the father's face as he perceived the group, but the smile soon passed away as he said,—

"Make your mother a cup of tea, Jessy. She has had a very poor night;" and then sat down in a dreamy way beside the table.

Jessy poured out the tea, and took some to her mother, and then the others had their breakfast. When they

had finished, the father went down to the shop to let Tom free, and Davy made his way into his mother's room.

"Why doesn't Ruth make the tea, Jessy?" growled Tom, as he sat down to his breakfast.

"I'm sure she's welcome to it," was the retort, "for I can't please you."

"No, no, Tom," put in Ruth; "Jessy is the proper person when your mother is not here. I shall be glad to help her in anything, but I am sure she is able to do that."

"I hope she'll take pattern by you then," said Tom.

This provoked another cross reply from Jessy, and Ruth had some trouble to keep the peace between them. The envious feelings, however, that Tom had roused did not subside. Jessy was as cross as possible; she would not let Ruth help her to wash up, she snapped at Rosa when she brought an old broken wooden doll for her cousin to admire, and she scowled at Ruth whenever she came near her.

"You'll know me better by and by, Jessy," said Ruth to herself, "I'll go now and see what I can do elsewhere," and tapping at her aunt's door, she went, and bade her a cheerful "good morning." Here Davy had been describing to his mother all that she had done, the bright, warm fire, the fresh air, and the nice smell of everything, and when Ruth came in, her aunt thanked her warmly.

"It is quite a load taken off my mind to think that you will be there to see after things; for Jessy is so heedless."

"Poor girl," said Ruth, "she is very anxious to manage well."

"Yes," replied her aunt, with a sigh; "but she has not the way, and I have never tried to teach her. I see it now, when I am laid quite helpless. Ah! if I had only showed her how to make her father and the children comfortable, instead of doing about myself, and letting her go her own way. I little knew what would be the end of it."

"She will learn in time," said Ruth, hopefully. "And now, aunt, is there anything I can do for you?"

"No thank you, my dear," replied her aunt; "unless you would set that arm-chair straight; Jessy pushed it round, when she went past, and it fidgets me."

"I could put the other things straight too, aunt, if it would not disturb you," said Ruth, and her aunt making no objection, she got the cloth she had begun to use for a duster, and quietly moving about the room, she cleaned and arranged the furniture, took all dirty things away, smoothed the bed down, and finally brought some warm water, and a clean soft towel of her own, that her aunt might wash her hands and face.

When this was done, she said, "Now, aunt, the doctor said so much about fresh air, that I should like to try to bring some into your room, if you will keep Rosa and Davy here." So little Rosa, fresh and clean herself, was put upon her mother's bed, and the doors of both rooms opened. Then the fire was stirred up, the window of the kitchen set wide open, and for a moment also one window in the bedroom. The other was left open for ten minutes, in spite of Jessy's protest, that Ruth was bent on giving them all their deaths of cold.

"I hope there is no danger," was Ruth's good-humoured answer, "we must blame the doctor if any

harm comes of it;" and in ten minutes all were shut again, and the two children sent back into the kitchen.

Though it had to come from a crowded neighbourhood, a breath of fresh air was a great boon to the invalid, and when Ruth sat quietly down beside her again, there was such a feeling of refreshment and repose come over her, that she fell into a quiet slumber, and for an hour or more Ruth watched beside her, fearing lest a movement might disturb her; and while she sat her thoughts were busy. She had now fairly begun her new life, and she was glad of the opportunity of looking calmly at what lay before her. It was no pleasant prospect. The mother sick, the father hopeless and indifferent, Jessy envious and discontented, Tom rough and dogged, all idle and untidy, and worse than all, as far as she had seen, no evidence of the fear of God amongst them, no sign of His love, no prayers offered up, no cross word or idle habit subdued—it was a pitiful sight, this household. Ruth, with all her hopefulness, could not deny the truth of this; but she prayed earnestly that she might be permitted in His strength to minister to her relations, and that she might in all her ways set forth her Master's glory. When her aunt awoke she said she felt much better, and Ruth went with a cheerful heart into the other room. Here she found the children by themselves, and full of trouble. Rosa had pulled a basin off the table, and broken it; and Ted, following Jessy's example, had slapped her for it; Davy had been indignant at this treatment of his little sister, so he and Ted had quarrelled next, and they all ran to Ruth with their complaints.

She told them how naughty it was of them to quarrel, and then took Davy to his mother's room, and told the others that if they would be very good, and not cry or quarrel all the day, she would give them something very nice that she had upstairs in her large box. Then persuading them to be good friends, and play together nicely, she left them for a minute, to go and speak to Jessy. She went upstairs, and into the bedroom with the quiet step that Mrs. Philips had always insisted on, and thus Jessy did not hear her coming, but continued her occupation. This was a no less useful one than trying on with great care, before the bit of looking-glass, Ruth's plain straw bonnet. The Sunday one lay on the dirty table near her, having been already tried. Although Ruth felt much annoyed to see her carefully-kept bonnets thus handled, she could not refrain from smiling as she saw Jessy's ridiculous twists and turns before the glass.

"And which do you like best?" she said, good-humouredly, coming close up to her.

Jessy started, and turned very red, but soon recovering herself, she gave a little awkward laugh, took the bonnet off, and said, "Lawk, they are but countryfied! You should see the bonnets in Regent Street; they would astonish you."

"I dare say they would," returned Ruth quietly; "but, Jessy, I think you should have asked my leave before you took those things out. Every Englishwoman's box should be her castle, in my opinion."

"Well, you needn't make such a fuss about my touching your bits of things," said Jessy, scornfully; and she turned away.

"I was coming up," said Ruth, as sweetly as if nothing

had happened; "I was coming up to consult you about unpacking my things. Do you think that you could spare me a shelf in that old press outside?"

"There's hardly anything in it," answered Jessy, a good deal mollified by the prospect of an unpacking,— "only a few things tumbling about."

"I shall be glad of it, then," said Ruth; "but first I should like to put this room to rights a bit. I have been partly a housemaid, you know, so I am accustomed to this kind of work. Suppose I take these rooms, whilst you get dinner ready. Your mother wishes me to help you, and the best way will be to divide the work. We shall get on quicker."

"There's nothing for dinner, scarcely," said Jessy gloomily; "and father was so cross when I asked him for money to buy potatoes with yesterday, that I daren't ask him to day."

"Shall I ask him?" said Ruth.

"He will give it to me as soon as to you, I should think," said Jessy, with a sudden snap.

"Come, Jessy, my dear cousin," said Ruth, speaking seriously, "we shall never get on together, if we stop to quarrel at every word. I have an earnest desire to help you, believe me, and if I make a mistake or two at first, from not understanding you all, you must not mind it."

Jessy looked rather ashamed, and muttered, "You can ask father, then, if you like."

"No, no," said Ruth, "not until I have explained something to you. You see, I have a little money of my own, chiefly from the rent of the house I used to live in, and that I may not be a burden upon you all, I am going to

pay a certain portion of that to your father every quarter; and the rest I must keep for my clothes, and to save, if I can, for future need. The first quarter's payment I have in my box, and I thought if I took it with me to your father, he would not be likely to grumble at having to pull out some pennies for potatoes."

"I should think he won't," said Jessy, pleased at being trusted; and she stood quite amiably, whilst Ruth unlocked her large box, with a strong key, that hung by a black ribbon round her neck; but she only got a glimpse of its contents, for Ruth took the money out of a smaller box in the corner of the larger one, and locked it up again in a trice.

Jessy was still dawdling about, looking at the trunk, and wondering what Ruth had to fill it with, when its owner returned, bringing some money for Jessy to market with. Jessy was pleased to see it; but the next minute her eye fell again on the bonnet-box, and she said,—

"Ruth, would you mind lending me your week-day bonnet to go out in? Mine is so shabby."

"No, Jessy," said Ruth, firmly, "I cannot lend you mine, but when we have a little time we will see what can be done to yours. I always trim my own, and sometimes at Mrs. Philips's I used to do the young ladies' bonnets too."

Jessy went off in a huff, and Ruth with a little sigh, began to arrange the bedrooms. They were in a sad untidy state; Ruth longed to give them a thorough turn out and washing, but she thought it better to do it by degrees, and be satisfied to-day with dusting and sweeping them. She went down-stairs to borrow the brush again of Tom, and as she came back, finding Ted and

Rosa by themselves, she thought it was not safe to leave them both: so she gave Ted a cloth and set him to rub the lower window-panes, which pleased him greatly, and took Rosa upstairs with her. As she passed her aunt's door, she stopped to pop her head in, nod and smile, and say, "Rosa is going to help me to make the beds," and then went on.

With great difficulty, Ruth contrived to get a window in each room opened, but she was repaid for her trouble by the current of fresh air that rushed in, and by the pleasant consciousness that she should have no more of the closeness that had so oppressed her the night before. And now she swept, and dusted, and moved the things about in right good earnest, singing or talking to Rosa all the time, and now and then lifting the child up in her arms, that she might see the world of roofs and chimneys through the open window.

When the bedrooms were set in order, Ruth went down to Jessy, and here she found enough to do in tidying some of the confusion of plates, and pans, and dishes, with which that unskilful housewife had surrounded herself. By dint of a gentle hint or two from Ruth, the dinner was not so badly cooked, and at least the knives and forks were clean; for Ruth, with some help from little Ted, had polished them. But there was no cloth spread for the meal. Jessy said that there were some table-cloths somewhere, but they were all dirty, and father said they could not afford to pay for washing them.

"Then I think you and I must contrive to wash them ourselves," said Ruth; "it would be so much nicer for your father to see a nice white cloth upon the table when he comes upstairs."

"Father never cares what there is, now-a-days," was Jessy's only answer; and presently Tom came up to his dinner, and said that his father was busy with a customer.

"Shall we not wait for him, Jessy?" said Ruth. But Rosa began to cry at the idea, and Jessy said they never waited—when Tom had done, their father would come up: so they helped the children, and Jessy took some dinner to her mother. Tom had soon finished, and went down to relieve his father. Ruth had kept his dinner hot, and though he scarcely spoke, he seemed to enjoy it. As soon as ever he had done it, he went down again, and Ruth offered to help Jessy to wash up; but the offer being declined, she went into the other room, and finding her aunt pretty well, and inclined to talk, she amused her by giving her an account of her journey, and by telling her also some stories of the more pleasant part of her life at Barnsley-fields.

Before the afternoon was over, Jessy came in and said, "Ruth, ain't you going to unpack?" It made her aunt uneasy to think that Ruth had not yet settled herself, as she called it, and she would have worried herself about not being up to clear a place for her, had not Ruth stopped her by saying gaily, that she was making herself quite at home, and as for places, Jessy had said that she might have a press that was nearly empty, so she should do very well. The children would have liked to help, but Jessy ordered them to stay down-stairs, and Ruth said if they were very good and quiet, she would bring them what she had promised.

Like most girls, Jessy enjoyed the unpacking of a box, and she uttered great exclamations of surprise at the

stores of neat, good clothes that Ruth possessed, so different from her own tawdry wardrobe. Ruth at present only took out what she was likely soon to want, besides her Sunday things, her lilac cotton dresses, her precious workbox, and her Bible and her Prayer-Book, and of course the store of good things for the children.

"Look, Jessy," she cried with delight, holding up the plum-loaf, "won't the children have a nice feast at tea?"

"La! what a beautiful cake!" exclaimed Jessy, and in high good-humour she went down with Ruth to display her treasures in the mother's room. The children began to shout with glee, but the sight of the home-looking country good things made their mother cry, and both children and cakes had to be hurried off. Ruth gave them some of the little cakes, just to amuse them, and put the large loaf away for tea, and then took her work, and sat down quietly beside her aunt.

She had never been accustomed to sit with idle fingers, and the long seam was quite a pleasure to her, whilst the watching her silent needle moving swiftly in and out was quite soothing to her aunt.

"To-morrow," thought Ruth, as she stitched away, "I must find something to mend amongst Rosa's little clothes; her pinafore, now, I see has but one string. For to-day, however, I have made fuss enough and change with poor Jessy's ways."

"Poor Jessy;" yes, that was the constant burden with the mother, too. Jessy's want of education, and her idle and untidy habits, were bemoaned; but it always ended in a lamentation over the girl's hard fate, and the mistake they had made in coming to London,

which was so unwholesome for the children, and where their business had never done well.

“Please God, you will get stronger. Jessy will grow wiser. I will take the burden off her. Tom is growing up to be quite a help in the shop,” were Ruth’s hopeful speeches. She would have liked to have said something about putting trust in God, about having no care for the morrow; but she felt, although she almost shrank from the thought, that this was a household which had been unused to praise God in prosperity, and which did not, therefore, call upon Him in the time of trouble. They had never said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord:” was it then to be wondered at, if the father was devoid of fervour and of diligence, that the mother sank unsupported, or that the children followed the bent of their neglected and untrained wills? There was much to sadden a thoughtful mind; but the young, fresh, faithful spirit of Ruth Benson rose with the necessity, and, looking at the germs of good she saw in each of them, she earnestly resolved to pray and labour in the ministering work that was set before her.

CHAPTER VIII.

“The trivial round, the common task
Would furnish all we ought to ask,
Room to deny ourselves ; a road
To bring us daily nearer God.”—KEBLE.

WHEN tea-time came, and Ruth served round large slices of her good plum-cake, she wished that good Mrs. Turner could have been near to see the pleasure that her offering gave.

A large piece was saved for Tom, and he enjoyed it silently as much as the little ones had done.

Ruth took care that the fire should be kept bright, and when the father came in after shutting up the shop, the hearth looked so uncommonly comfortable that he smiled, and seemed inclined to stay with the children ; but a minute reminded him of the absent mother, and he sighed, and went, instead, to sit with her.

“Father’s not gone out to-night,” said Davy to Ruth, when she came from her aunt’s room, and sat beside the table with her work.

She did not yet understand how even the little blind boy could be pleased when his father did not go out ; but she soon complied with the request that he next made to her, and began to tell him and the little ones some tales. Jessy, meanwhile, not yet having made up her mind whether to treat this strange new cousin as friend or foe, sat close to the fire, looking into it, rocking her chair backwards and forwards, and thinking how

hard everything and everybody were upon her. At last she started up and said, roughly, "Come, Davy, it's time that you and Ted were off to bed; I wish that Rosa would only go now too."

"Ruth's going to tell us a hymn," said Davy, without moving.

"Will you let them stay to hear it, Jessy?" asked Ruth.

"Oh, of course," replied Jessy, tossing her head with scorn.

So Ruth repeated them the Evening Hymn. Scarcely had the last word been spoken, when Jessy cried, "Now then, we've had enough of that Methodist stuff; be off, both of you."

Looking at Ruth to support them, the boys resisted Jessy with all their might, but she threatened to bring their father in a minute, and Ruth, to their surprise, looked stern, and quite deserted them. To poor Davy, indeed, it was no matter how Ruth looked, but he felt the sternness of her tone, and at last they went. Jessy hustled them into bed in no time, and then came down to wait for the doctor's visit. But to-night he did not come; and about ten o'clock her father came, and ordered Jessy to go to bed rather sharply, complaining of their burning candle, and keeping Rosa up: so she and Ruth took the child to bed.

"Will you get up soon in the morning?" said Ruth, before they went to bed. "We might scour the boards, and have all clean and nice before breakfast."

"Well," said Jessy, rather sulkily; "though I am sure I don't see the use of making such a fuss about things."

So when Ruth got up she wakened her, but received nothing but grumbling in return. Some little time, however, after she had gone down-stairs, Jessy did make her appearance, much to the surprise of Tom, who would have put her in a rage at once with his unpleasant remarks upon her early rising, had not Ruth soon put a stop to it. Then Ruth set Jessy to work in such a lively, pleasant way, that she could not but comply, and between them, and with the help of Tom, the room was cleaned much more to Ruth's satisfaction than it had been the day before; and even Jessy looked round upon their morning's work with some pride, and muttered, "You've got such a way of doing things, with being in place."

"Yes," said Ruth, "a year or two under a particular mistress is a thing to be thankful for; but you'll soon learn, Jessy. You have a pair of good strong arms, and I am sure you have the wish to do. The next thing to learn is the best way of doing things."

Jessy was not affronted by this remark; she was pleased with herself, and in a good humour, and the good humour lasted till after breakfast, so that Ruth ventured to propose that they should find and wash one of the tablecloths. Jessy was rather pleased at the idea, now that she was in a working mood, and after some searching they found two old ones rolled up in a heap, with some little things of the children's, and an iron in the midst of them, and the whole in the washing-tub, so they had not to search further for their implements, and they washed them in the back yard, dried them across a cord that Tom fastened from two large nails that were in the opposite walls of the yard, and in the afternoon they ironed them.

This evening the doctor did come, and to the joy of her husband, pronounced Mrs. Martin to be much better. Her mind seemed easier, and he thought that, although he feared she never could be well again, she would improve in strength. "And," added the doctor, "some part of this improvement must be owing to that pretty country niece." He could scarcely have believed that such a change in the appearance of everything could have been effected in three days.

The doctor was right. There was a change; the fresh air had done them all good; the cleanliness had made them more comfortable; and Ruth's cheerful industry had seemed to have brought new life into the house. Unfortunately, when the doctor had gone, Jessy's father told her what he had said, and, in rather a harsh way, advised her to leave off her untidy habits, and try to imitate her cousin.

With Jessy's tendency to jealousy, this was all that was needed to inflame her feelings into an almost hatred of her cousin; and her manner became so annoying that Ruth found it difficult to avoid quarrelling with her. Many times she would have given up the struggle and have left everything to Jessy, but her aunt had said, "I rely upon you entirely, Ruth,—you will teach the poor children what is right;" whilst to Jessy she had said, "Ruth has had much experience, my dear,—you must learn all you can of her;" and thus Ruth felt that she ought not to shrink from the responsibility, however trying it might be.

Through the children Jessy could annoy her the worst. By caresses and by bribery, using for this purpose the cake that Ruth had brought, she would make them resist

their cousin's desires, and disregard her wishes, which were always on the side of good order and obedience; and Ruth had no appeal. Not for worlds would she have annoyed her aunt by complaining of Jessie's conduct; and as for her uncle, he generally looked so cross, so fagged and careworn, when he came upstairs, that Ruth took care rather to keep things cheerful for him than to distress him with complaints.

But we must not forestall events; let us return to the first Saturday afternoon.

Mrs. Martin had kept improving, and she was now a good deal better. It was a fine warm day, and the sun was shining brightly through her now clean windows. The sunshine reminded her of the busy world outside; she remembered that Ruth had as yet seen nothing of London, and remarking on Davy's thin, pale face, she proposed that they all should have a walk. Out of mere contradiction, Jessie raised endless objections. Her bonnet was too shabby; Ruth herself had planned some work at home for this afternoon; Rosa's walking-things were not fit to be seen; Davy was better pleased to remain in the house. With a sigh the mother gave it up; she never argued with her froward daughter; and Ruth, with a sort of gasp for a breath of outdoor's air, said, "We will look over the children's things as soon as we can, Jessie, and then, if aunt likes, we will take them out by turns every day. Children cannot thrive without air and exercise."

"You are right, Ruth," sighed the mother again; "I'll be glad if you'll see about it, poor things."

Upon which Jessie, feeling herself affronted, flounced out of the room without another word. She had not

been gone more than a minute or two, when Tom came up to say that Ruth was wanted in the shop; and going down, she found there her old travelling companions, Andrew and his wife. Her heart bounded with pleasure at the sight of them, which seemed strange, when a week before she had never seen them; but they had been so kind and friendly,—besides, they were a sort of link between her and her old friends at home.

The pleasure was mutual.

“It seems so long since I have seen you,” said Ruth.

“Yes; but not long enough for us to forget you,” replied Andrew. “I was just going to take Lucy to see the animals in the Zoological Gardens, and we thought we would look in on you, and maybe you would like to go with us.”

“Indeed I should,” exclaimed Ruth, joyfully, “and I am very much obliged to you for thinking of me; but I am rather busy this afternoon.”

“Not a bit of it,” interrupted her uncle, who was also in the shop; “I’m not going to have you slave yourself to death here; so slip on your bonnet and go and see the animals with your friends.”

“Thank you, uncle,” said Ruth, gladly; “I will not keep you waiting long;” and she was moving away, when she stopped, hesitating.

“What is it, dear?” asked Lucy.

“Only,” she replied, “would you mind—mind my taking one of the little boys with me—Davy I mean,” she added, to her uncle.

“Not in the least,” cried Andrew and Lucy, in a breath.

And in a minute she ran upstairs, explained quickly to

her aunt, and led Davy, who could scarcely credit his good fortune, up to her own room to be dressed. Hastily she got out the little beaver hat that had escaped the general dirt by being shut up in a bandbox at the top of the old press, brushed his shabby tunic, and finished him off with one of her own white linen collars, and a bow of fresh black ribbon. Her own toilet did not take her long because her shelves were always in such good order that she knew where to find everything, and nothing was ever left unmended or unfit to be put on at once.

They were two happy young women that Andrew held on either arm, and he himself was no less contented. Davy tightly clasped Ruth's vacant hand, and she was never too much engrossed by talking or looking at the wonders on every side to attend to her little cousin.

As soon as Ruth, in a whisper, had explained to her friends that poor Davy was quite blind, Lucy's kind heart welled up in pity towards him, whilst Andrew wanted to take an omnibus at once, lest he should get too tired; but Ruth said that there was no occasion, Davy said he liked to walk, and so they settled that they would defer the ride until they returned, when they would be more tired. And then through the noisy gay streets, where the shop-windows were full of beautiful things, and carriages were rattling up and down in one constant stream, and through quiet back streets where dirt and dulness only seemed to dwell, they walked on bravely until they reached the park. Oh, how pleased was Ruth to see the green grass and trees again! It seemed a month since her last walk at Haverleigh. She drank in the fresh air eagerly; and as she looked up at the wide, open space above, and on the pretty scene

around, her heart rose in thankfulness for the pure joys that are bestowed so freely on this sinful world.

And now they entered the gardens, and went up the steps to the bridge; and soon Ruth felt the little hand she held shrink and start, and then grasp hers more firmly, when they heard a strange, low roar, and some one near said, "There's the lion." Now they crossed the bridge, and went close to the dens or cages that contained the animals. Davy was much amused, as soon as he had been assured that strong iron bars stood between him and the growling beasts. His companions in turn described to him the beautiful striped tigers that were always going round uneasily in their small abode, and the hyenas that gave such startling laughs or yells, and the immense lion that lay with his large head half shaded by the tawny mane, gazing majestically upon the spectators.

When they arrived at the pit of the great bear, Davy threw a piece of biscuit to it, and you might have fancied that the child could see when you looked at his lively face and movements. It is needless to describe all they saw. The graceful giraffe with its long arched neck, the huge intelligent elephant, and the heavy hippopotamus; the chattering monkeys, the brilliant birds; and the smaller animals, that were confined in their pretty houses covered with creeping plants or shaded by tall trees, or, if harmless, trotting loose upon the smooth green lawns. They were pleased with all of them, and never once thought of fatigue, until Andrew said they must be tired, and took them into one of the refreshment-rooms.

Here they had a good rest, and were treated by Andrew to tea and buns; and when they had finished, it was

getting late, so they left the gardens and set off homewards. At the top of Regent-street they hailed an omnibus, and rattling away in this, Ruth and Davy soon found themselves at the bottom of their street, where it stopped.

Ruth felt shy before all the people that were in the omnibus, and she spoke in a low whisper when she thanked Lucy and Andrew for their kindness. They bid farewell here, for the next day the young couple were going to spend with some friends at Chelsea, and early on Monday morning they were to start for home. How much of glad anticipation there seemed in that word home might be seen from the proud trusting look that Andrew threw upon the future partner of its joys and sorrows as he uttered it.

And when he had helped Ruth and Davy out of the omnibus, and insisted on paying the fare for both, he repeated the desire that he and his wife had before expressed that Ruth would some time visit them at No. 14, Green-street, Manchester; and he also begged that, if she ever stood in need of a helping friend, she would remember that she had two at that same address.

Ruth felt very sorry to part from these kind young people, and her mind was full of them as she led Davy home. Tom was sitting, as usual, moody in a corner, when they went into the shop; and after speaking to him, they went straight, by Davy's wish, up into his mother's room.

"The lion was like thunder, mother, and it frightened me; but Ruth held me fast, and it had great bars, so that it could not get out," was Davy's first speech, as he crept up to his usual place beside the bed.

His mother smiled, and said it was very kind of Ruth to think of taking him : but she looked tired ; and when Ted, who was in the room, became noisy and riotous in his anxiety to know all about the wild beasts, Ruth, fearing so many might fatigue her aunt, took him and some dirty tea-things away, and went into the kitchen.

Here she found Jessy sitting on a low stool near the fire, with her dress and hair rather more untidy than usual, and her elbows resting on her knees. At a little distance, Rosa was enjoying herself by playing at emptying slops out of the tea-cups upon the floor.

"We have had such a pleasant afternoon, Jessy," said Ruth, as she came into the room.

"I dare say you have," replied Jessy, getting up with a jerk, and rushing up to Rosa ; then giving her a shake, and snatching the cup out of her hand.

"I see that I have just come home in time to clear away the tea-things," said Ruth, soothing the roar that followed by giving Rosa a cloth to wipe up the mess with.

"I suppose you'll want some tea first," muttered Jessy.

"No, thank you," replied Ruth ; "I am sorry that you kept it for us ; Davy and I had some nice tea in the beautiful gardens. I'll put my bonnet off, and then I'll come and tell you all about it."

"You needn't trouble yourself," was the ungracious reply, as Ruth left the room.

She was soon back again, and took no notice of Jessy's sullenness ; but as she moved about, restoring order in several places where her eye quickly saw there was something wrong, she said,—

"Now, Jessy, I have had my pleasure, it's but fair that I should have my work. Won't you go to your mother and hear Davy's story? He is rarely delighted, I can assure you.

"Poor fellow," said Jessy, "it is rarely enough that he is delighted, indeed."

This was discouraging, and every other attempt at friendliness was rebuffed in the same way. Jessy was in a thoroughly bad temper. Ruth was already a little excited—the transition is easy from the excitement of pleasure and fatigue to that of anger—and when she had put the kettle on to boil, and Jessy in a cool provoking manner took it off again directly, Ruth felt very well inclined to give her a good box on the ear. But the passionate desire recalled her to herself. She sat down for a minute or two with Rosa, who was getting sleepy, on her knee, and tried by prayer and recollection to compose herself.

She succeeded—no one can fail who earnestly applies for that strength which is unfailing—and in a calm and humble manner she rose up again, and set Rosa gently down. Then putting the kettle on once more, she said,—

"Let the kettle stay on the fire Jessy, please; I want some hot water to wash up with."

Perhaps the subdued and patient tone had struck even Jessy's careless nature, for she said no more.

Before long, Ted came running in and said that Davy was so tired that he had fallen asleep upon his mother's bed, and then he hung about Ruth, and begged her to tell him and Rosa about the animals. Ruth could not refuse, and she soon sat down with Rosa on her

knee, and her lively stories kept them wide awake and happy.

Whilst they were thus occupied, a faltering step was heard upon the stairs, Jessy gave an uneasy start, and her father came into the room.

"Ruth has seen more than thirty monkeys, father," cried Rosa, slipping off Ruth's knee, and running up to him.

"Be quiet, child," was the cross reply, as her father pushed her away from him.

Thus rudely checked, the little girl slunk back again to her cousin. Her father went up to the fire, and stood there for a minute, in a slouching way, with his back to it; then suddenly turning round to Jessy, he said,—
"Have you done my coat yet?"

"No, father," replied Jessy, half frightened, half sulky; "I haven't had time."

"Haven't had time!" repeated her father in a bitter tone. "No; nor ever will have time. No time for anything but idling about, you lazy slut;" and his wrath waxing greater with his own words, he ended by giving her a heavy blow, as he added, "Get off to bed with you, you're no good here."

Jessy burst into tears, but was hastened by another angry exclamation, and prepared to leave the room; but, before she could get out, her father added,—

"Don't go whimpering to your mother, now, or I will come after you;" and not satisfied without, he did follow, and waited till she had gone quite upstairs, then came back and sat down, without speaking, beside the fire. Both the children clung to their cousin, and Rosa began to cry.

"Hush, Rosa!" said Ruth, in rather a sharp tone, for she thought that a little firmness on her part might prevent her uncle, who was plainly influenced by liquor, from interfering.

Rosa stopped her tears, but she could not check a frightened sob, and Ruth saying, "Come along, children, it is quite your bed-time," led them away, glad to get them safely out of the reach of their father's anger.

When she had put Teddy to bed, she took the little one into her room; there Jessie was sitting in the dark. "I have brought a light, Jessie," she said, and spoke kindly, but dared not try to soothe her cousin, for Jessie's eyes still glared with anger. "Will you put Rosa to bed? Your father's tired to night, Jessie," she added hesitatingly, "and not quite himself, or he would not have been so severe with you."

Jessie threw herself on the bed, and began to cry violently. Ruth stole up to her, and putting her arm round her, ventured to give her a kiss, and said, "Rosa is frightened, dear; get to bed with her, as soon as you can;" and then she slipped down stairs again, for she greatly feared some annoyance to her aunt. Her fears on this point were quite needless. John Martin loved his wife sincerely; he would not willingly have grieved her at any time, and he was sober enough to know that he was not fit company for her now, and he sat still by the fireside.

In the bedroom all was quiet, and Davy fast asleep. Ruth asked if her aunt wanted anything, and found that she was quite comfortable, so she whispered, "Uncle has come in, I am going to sit with him a bit," and returned to her work in the other room.

Her uncle was still sitting in a miserable way and

quite silent, so Ruth did not disturb him, but opening her work box, began to sew. Soon he fell into a doze, and she stitched away, glad to get this time for quiet sewing, because it helped her to get on with a little frock that she was contriving for Rosa out of an old print one of her own, and also because she was thankful to have an opportunity for a little useful thought. She had already begun to love her new relations, and was deeply interested in them, and she felt that she might be useful to them, but she saw also the dangers and temptations round her. Her temper and her patience were so tried on some occasions, her humility on others; and in the midst of so many favouring earthly interests she feared that she should lose sight of the heavenly home that she so earnestly desired to keep always in her mind. But thought and prayer as usual, helped and cheered her; and as she made good resolutions for the future, her needle flew with swiftness, and an hour passed on. Presently her uncle wakened with a deep sigh, and stared at Ruth. Soon he got up, and walked about the room a while, then sat down, and sighed again. "Ay, ay!" he said at last, "stitching away, and you may stitch!" Then he was silent again for several minutes. "You may work, and that girl of mine will look at you, and her poor mother must lie yonder." Then he stopped with another sigh, and resumed his silent gaze into the fire.

"Jessy tries to do her best, uncle," said Ruth; "she has had a hard burden upon her lately for one so young and spirited."

"Hard, ay," repeated John almost mechanically, "poverty and sickness—hard, very hard!" And there was another pause.

"My aunt's a good deal better to night, I think," Ruth ventured to observe. "It is wonderful what girls may learn at Jessie's age," was her next remark, in a cheerful tone. "She is very fond of the little ones, though she may snap at them sometimes. She is quick at learning too. We are going to be very busy together next week, I hope. You must encourage her a little, uncle, please. I expect we shall get on very nicely soon, when we have become a little more used to each other's ways; then, when aunt is better, and can get into this room again, she will have nothing to do but to sit like a lady and order us about.

He gave a mournful shake of the head at these cheerful prophecies, but, in spite of himself, he smiled, and rose from his chair as if to go to his wife.

"Wait a minute, uncle, please; poor Davy was so tired that he fell asleep upon aunt's bed. I'd better carry him upstairs before you go."

"I will light you then," said John, following her with the candle.

Tom, half asleep, was sitting beside his wakeful mother; Davy had scarcely stirred before, but he was roused up by the entrance of Ruth and his father. As he opened his eyes, his countenance assumed a look of pain. To the poor blind boy, awakening gave no light, and he did not know where he was.

"Davy dear," said Ruth, "you've been asleep on mother's bed: give her a kiss now, and come up with me to Teddy; he has been gone a long while."

Davy's little arms stole round his mother, and then, quite reassured, he let Ruth carry him upstairs, and put him in his own bed.

"The bars were very strong, Ruth," he said, when she had laid him down.

"Yes, dear," she answered, remembering what he would be thinking of, "thick and strong. The lion will be sound asleep now. And Davy must sleep too. Lie still and I will sing to you."

Ruth had a sweet voice, and at her Sunday-school at home she had learnt many pretty hymns, and on a Sunday evening, it had been one of the greatest pleasures of her father and mother to sit and listen to her singing, and now the gentle sound came with soothing influence to the child, and he soon sank into slumber. Then Ruth went down-stairs again, with the intention of putting the untidy room into something like order for Sunday morning. She had not been there long before Tom came in.

"I thought I knew what you would be at," said he; "you'll tire yourself. Let me help you."

And handily he did help her; and as he brushed the shoes, and fetched her coals and water, he warmed into his usual confidence towards her.

"Father's been flying out with Jessy, hasn't he? That's what we often have. Things are miserable in the house: father goes out and gets liquor, comes back and scolds Jessy, and then, of course, it's more miserable than ever. Not that she doesn't deserve it. But then it makes her no better, only worse."

"You are always complaining of Jessy, Tom," said Ruth; "the children tease her, and try her temper; and your father, you say, often scolds her. Don't you think that she has a good deal to bear?"

"That is just what she's always saying of herself,"

answered Tom; "but I never thought to hear you taking her part in that way; I am sure she has behaved badly enough to you these few days that you have been here."

"Jessy is a little bit cross sometimes, Tom, that I must allow," said Ruth, smiling; "but what I want to say is, that I think if you were as kind to her as you are to me, she would be happier herself, and pleasanter to other people. You are her eldest brother, and I think you should try not to be a hindrance to her. You don't mind my saying this, do you, Tom?"

Ruth was blushing, and feeling hot all over with the effort she had made to give advice where it might be scorned; but Tom, to her relief, only answered,—

"No, indeed. Now let me rub that table down—only I must say that I wish Jessy was more like you."

They had no more talk after this; and Ruth soon after went upstairs to bed.

CHAPTER IX.

“ But when the sweet-toned Sabbath-chime,
Pouring its music on the breeze,
Proclaims the well-known holy time
Of prayer and thanks and bended knees.”

REV. J. MOULTRIE.

WHEN Ruth got up next morning, she tried to waken Jessy, as usual, but the latter only yawned, turned over, grumbled,—“ They won’t be up for long enough yet, it’s Sunday morning,” and went to sleep again. By the time she did rise, Ruth had dressed the children, put everything tidy, and made breakfast ready.

Her uncle was late enough, it was true, and when he did make his appearance, he was more pale and depressed than ever. Jessy need not have crept in half-frightened, as she did, for her father never noticed her.

Ruth, knowing that it would be soon church-time, hastened breakfast as much as she could; then, leaving Jessy to clear away, she hastened to her aunt’s room, and afterwards upstairs. As she finished her work here, the sound of church-bells came ringing through the open window, striking an old familiar chord in her heart, and reminding her that in this strange city, too, there was still the same Almighty Father ready to listen to his children’s prayers. She ran downstairs, and said,—

“ Jessy, do you hear the bells? Is that the church you go to?”

"We don't go to any regular," said Jessy. Ruth gave a look of surprise, and she added, "We used to go often when we lived in the country, and mother and I have been here sometimes; but father took us oftener to the park, and since mother's been ill we've gone no where."

"But you will go to church to-day, will you not?" asked Ruth, feeling shocked and uncomfortable. "Now that I am here, one of us can take the children in the morning, and the other in the afternoon."

"I am sure I have nothing fit to go to church in," replied Jessy; "and as for the children, they have never been used to go lately, even if they had proper clothes."

"I'll go to church with you, Ruth, if you are going," said Tom, who was sitting in the window with Rosa on his knee.

"Thank you, Tom," said she; "but really, Jessy, had we not better take Ted and Davy too?"

"You can ask father, if you like; but you'll not find us any of your pious Methodists," was Jessy's cross and ignorant reply.

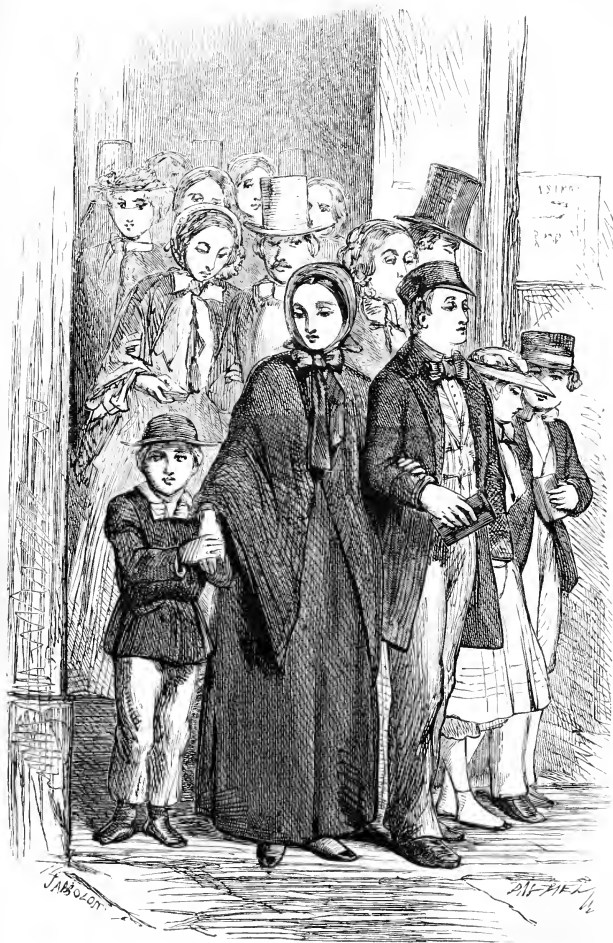
Ruth went into the next room.

"Aunt," she said, "may I take the children to church? Tom and I are going."

"I'm sure I don't know," replied the invalid, looking troubled. "They have no things, I am afraid, or else Davy likes it, poor fellow."

"What's the good of taking such children?" said the father testily.

"There is always good at church, John," said his wife, in a faint timid tone.



"Take me to church, Ruth," said Davy, who had followed her, in an imploring tone.

"Davy looked nice yesterday, aunt, when he was out," said Ruth, "so I should think he might go."

"Take him, then," said her uncle, impatiently, "and don't tease your mother—your aunt, I mean, any more about it."

Ruth did not answer, but reproaching herself for having disturbed her aunt, she slipped away with Davy. They were soon ready, and joined Tom, who drew himself up in his thread-bare jacket, and looked quite proud to be his cousin's guide and escort.

When they turned out of the by-street in which they lived, they found themselves in the middle of a stream of people, whose steps were all bent in the same direction as their own, towards the sound of the church-bells. The church was not far off, but it was some time before they got in, because there was such a crowd in the entrance; at last, however, after standing for some time, they were beckoned to by a pew-opener, and shown to a bench in one of the aisles. The service had then just begun, but the people still kept crowding in, until every place was filled.

"Will you take me to church every Sunday, Ruth?" whispered Davy, as they came out, "I like to hear the music. Only I wish the gentleman would not speak such a long time."

"That is the sermon, dear, and it is to teach us," she replied; "but you will understand it better when you are a bigger boy."

"We will always go when we can, won't we, Tom? and Jessy and the rest; too, I hope, in time," said Ruth.

"I can't say, but I like going to church sometimes," said Tom, "as well as the steam-boat or lounging in the park—one gets so hot and tired; and one thing I am sure of," continued he, musingly, "we have never been so well off since we gave up going regularly."

"I should think no one could be well off, or happy, either, who does not go to church," said Ruth.

"Oh!" said Tom, "but I only meant that it's nice sitting there, and one feels so comfortable when one comes away. You don't think it makes all that matter, do you, Ruth? Many people don't go to church, and they are no worse off, that I see."

"I never thought much about people not going," said Ruth, "because I thought that all Christians would try to go to their place of worship, on Sundays, at least; but I know by myself, that I should be miserable if I did not go."

"I can't fancy you very miserable, cousin Ruth," said Tom, "though you look serious enough just now; but do you really think that everybody ought to go to church?"

"Certainly, I do," said Ruth, warmly. "All church people—and I wish everybody in the world were church people."

"Well now, Ruth," said Tom, who had heard his father argue, and thought that he was talking quite like a man, "can you tell me what good one really does get by going to church?"

"I never heard any one talk that way before, Tom, except once," said Ruth, half-frightened; "did your clergyman never tell you about these things?"

"We have no particular clergyman here, that I know

of," said Tom; "but I wish you would tell me what good you get by going to church; you are not the sort of girl to be so earnest about nothing? Why are you so anxious about going? What do you go for?"

"Well, Tom," said Ruth, "be serious and I will tell you. I go to church because we have been commanded in the Bible, not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together; and because our Lord Jesus Christ has promised to be in the midst of us there. I go to confess my sins, to pray for forgiveness, and strength to do better; and to join with all the children of God, in praising Him for His mercies, and to listen to the teaching and the preaching of His Holy Word."

Ruth stopped, and Tom was silent, whilst they walked some paces; then he said,—

"But now, really, Ruth, do you mean that you are thinking about all this, and not looking at the fine bonnets, and the pictures on the windows, and that sort of thing?"

"I try not to think about anything else," said Ruth. "It would be no use going at all, if I did not. I fancy that Sundays are like steps to Heaven, and if I miss one, I am thrown back again."

"Why, you don't mean that you are thinking about dying, and Heaven, and that sort of thing, young and strong as you are, Ruth? I don't know how you come to be so cheerful."

"Thinking about Heaven is the best thing to make one cheerful," replied she. "Nothing seems to trouble one so much when one can look forward to a place where there is no parting or trouble of any sort."

They had now reached their own door, but before they went in, Tom said,—

“You are a strange girl, Ruth, but I wouldn’t care how many more there were like you.”

Ruth smiled, but shook her head; and then she led Davy carefully through the darkened shop, and upstairs into the kitchen.

She found that Jessy had had an uneasy morning; not from having too much work, for Ruth had taken care to have everything ready for Sunday, even to the knives and forks, and the tablecloth, to be used for the first time to-day; but Jessy, finding her time at her own disposal, had gone upstairs to try on Ruth’s morning dress, of which she liked the pattern, and to look over her books and little properties; and whilst she was thus occupied, there had been a quarrel down below. Ted had begun to tease Rosa, as usual; she had become cross, and had struck at Ted, who had therefore knocked her down. The little girl had fallen against the table-leg, and raised a lump on her head. The father, hearing the noise, had come in and beat Ted, and then calling Jessie down, had scolded her severely for leaving the two little ones by themselves.

But this was not all. During the affray, and consequent excitement, the potatoes had boiled dry; half of them were spoiled, and a most unsavoury odour of burning greeted their noses as they entered. Ted was standing in the window with his finger in his mouth, and Jessy, with swollen eyes, was near the fire, looking the picture of misery.

It was easy to see that something must have gone wrong; but Ruth, thinking it better not to notice it,

merely said, "I am afraid you will think me late, Jessy ; it is a long way to church:" and then, still leading Davy, she peeped into his mother's room. Here her aunt asked if Davy was not tired ; but Ruth said that she thought he had enjoyed the walk, and he had been much pleased with the beautiful singing ; and then she went up stairs to take her bonnet off.

She soon came down again, with her good black gown pinned up, and a clean white apron over all, and asked Jessie how the dinner was getting on.

"Tom has gone to fetch the pie from the bake-house," mumbled Jessy,—“but the potatoes are not fit to eat.”

"That is a pity," she answered, cheerfully ; "but it is fortunate that we have a pie,—the potatoes will not be so much missed. We must take better care to-morrow."

The potatoes were all removed, and no one missed them. Ruth laid the cloth with as much care as if Mrs. Philips had been there to see how it was done, and then they sat down to the savoury dinner that she had prepared, the mother enjoying the portion that was sent to her, as much as the rest did theirs. Ruth soon found out that Ted was in disgrace, for when she called him to come to dinner, his father burst out into fresh anger against him ; but she pleaded for him, and her uncle, softened by the unusual comfort round him, yielded to her wishes, and Ted crept up to the table with the others. Then Tom talked to his father, and Davy told him about the music he had heard, and they all enjoyed themselves.

After dinner they moved into the mother's room, and Ruth brought out some of Mrs. Turner's little cakes ; and they stayed there until her aunt seemed

inclined to sleep, and then the young ones went back into the kitchen.

"It must be nearly time for afternoon church," said Ruth.

"You surely would never be thinking of going to church again; besides, it is pouring down hailstones."

"You cannot go out," said Tom; and the children clamoured for her to stay. Ruth knew that the hailstones would not have kept her away, at home, but she considered that perhaps this afternoon she had better stay with the children. For the future she made up her mind to spare no pains to persuade Jessy, and her uncle, if possible, to establish the habit of taking the young ones to church regularly twice. The father had stayed beside his wife, and now the children clustered round the fire.

"Tell us some of the fashions, Ruth," said Jessy, when they had all arranged themselves, and a freshening poke had made the fire burn up cheerily. "There are lots of fine people go to that church, I know."

"The fashion was to pray, Jessy," replied Ruth.

"How tiresome you are!" exclaimed her thoughtless cousin, much annoyed, "you know very well what I mean. What sort of bonnets were there, and did shawls or mantles seem mostly worn?"

"Dear Jessy," said Ruth, "you must not be vexed with me; but I do not think it is right to be looking at bonnets and mantles when one is in church."

"Law," said Jessy, "what did you look at, then?"

"Never mind now, please Jessy, let me tell you instead what I used to see somewhere else." And then, taking Rosa up into her lap, she began to tell them about

her last place at Barnsley-fields, and what she used to do on Sundays; how after breakfast she used to assist the young ladies, and then dress Master Walter to go in the carriage with his mamma; and for Jessy's amusement, she described the rich blue velvet dress that he used to wear, and the handsome collar that fell over it, and the little black felt hat and feather that had to be set so carefully on his bright, curly head; and then she told them how quickly she used to have to run and put her own bonnet on, that she might be ready to walk with the cook or housemaid, whose turn it might be to go to church. And she described the pretty walk that they had to take through the fields, and through the long lane where the clusters of roses and the sweet garlands of honeysuckle grew, and then through the wood by the side of the running river, till they came to the little country town, where the church was; and how, if they were too soon, they used to sit on an old tombstone in the churchyard, and listen to the sweet sound of the church-bells floating down the water.

"How nice that would be!" said Davy when she stopped. "And was there beautiful singing at that church?"

"Yes," said Ruth; "but, Davy, you would have liked the singing best in our old church at home. It was so soft, and full, and beautiful, and everybody sang. Mr. Elmsley, our clergyman, used to say that it always made his heart glad to hear the voices of his people so united."

"Ruth," asked Davy again, "did the old man cry when they brought him the coat and told him that his little son was dead?"

He was thinking of the history of Joseph that he had heard partly read that morning.

"Tell us the story of it," said Teddy.

"Tell us a story," echoed little Rosa, slipping off Jessy's knee.

"Go back to Jessy then, if she will have you; I have Ted, you see," said Ruth, ever careful of her cousin's jealous temper. And then she told them the history that has enchained and charmed the ears of all children, whether little Jews or Gentiles, for so many thousand years,—Joseph sold by his brethren into Egypt. "It is all in the Bible, God's own word," she said, when she had finished telling it, "and when Ted and Rosa have learnt to read, they shall read it to you, Davy."

But Davy would not wait till then; he begged Ruth to read it all out of the Bible now, and as Tom also wished it, and Jessy made no objection, with her reverent manner and her sweet voice she read the history in all the beautiful simplicity of Scripture language.

"Joseph was a good boy, you see, Davy," said Ruth, when she had closed the book. "He obeyed his father, and went after his brothers, although he was frightened of them; and God blessed him and loved him, and kept him from evil, from the time that he was poor and in slavery until he became a rich, great man."

"Why didn't he kill his cruel brothers, then?" asked Davy.

"Because he knew that it was better to forgive them; and then he sent for his old father, and they all lived together in the fruitful land of Egypt."

Ruth was interrupted by the entrance of her uncle; and Davy went away, feeling by the tables and the walls,

as was his custom, to detail to his mother the wonderful things that Ruth had read to them. Tea-time came presently; and no sooner was it over, than John Martin, who had been doing nothing but grumble at the nuisance of a wet Sunday afternoon, put on his hat, and crept out of the room in an uneasy way, and as if he did not wish to be noticed. Ruth, with an instinctive feeling, knew that something was wrong, and went into her aunt's room, with Rosa in her arms.

"Where is your uncle?" was the anxious question, as soon as they entered. She hesitated a moment.

"Fader's don out," lisped Rose.

"Again," murmured her mother; and turning her head away, she sighed heavily.

"And Rosa and I have come to amuse you till he comes back," said Ruth; "he won't be long, perhaps."

Then she sat down in her usual place, and Rosa began to play about, and prattle to her mother. After awhile she got too noisy, and Ruth took her back to Jessie, and then returned.

"Ruth," said her aunt, when she had sat down again, "my Davy tells me that you have been reading to them. I have forgotten all those things; more's the pity that I should have left any one to do it for me. Your mother was always better than I was, and steadier. It seems only like yesterday that I was bent on going to the races at Carperleigh. I knew that father would never consent to it; but Jacob Walker, that was a young man that was wanting to marry me, said that he would come and fetch me out to go and see his grandmother, and then we could go on to Carperleigh unknown to any one. I did not like it much; but I soon let him persuade me, and

that night he came, and asked me before them all to go with him next day to see his grandmother, for she had got the asthma bad again, and wished to see me. Nobody made any objection to it; but when we went to bed that night, Margaret came to me. I see her now, Ruth,—your eyes and mouth, but not quite so tall; and speaking in her kind firm way—she was a good few years older than me, and she was engaged to your father then,—

“ ‘Sarah,’ said she, ‘you’ll not mind me speaking when there is no mother to do it instead of me.’ ”

“ Your grandmother died, Ruth, when I was twelve years old.

“ ‘But I’ve been thinking,’ Margaret went on to say, ‘that if Abraham was to propose to me what Jacob has planned with you, I should never trust him again.’ ”

“ At this I sprang up in a passion; ‘And what has Jacob planned with me,’ I said; ‘may I not walk with him to see his poor old grandmother?’ ”

“ ‘Oh, Sarah,’ said Margaret, and the tears were standing in her eyes, ‘if our mother could have lived to hear her youngest utter such a deceit. When Jacob was here, I could not help hearing him say to you as he left the house, “We shall get to the fair yet, Sally,” and I saw through it all.’ ”

“ I was a good deal ashamed, but I muttered, ‘It’s no lie, we are going to his grandmother’s.’ ”

“ ‘No lie to make my father think you’re only going there, when you know it is only a pretence for getting to a place that he would never give you leave to go to. Oh, Sarah,’ and Margaret spoke very earnestly, I can fancy I hear her now—‘Oh, Sarah, my dear little sister, let me beg of you to have nothing more to do with the man that

would teach you that this deceit is not a lie. You do not really care for Jacob,—I know that; will you then, for him, give up your father, and your sister, and your hope of Heaven! No liar can enter there. The Lord of our salvation has told us so Himself. Oh, Sarah, part from him before it is too late, and come back to the friends who love you far better than he can do.’

“Your mother won me over that time, Ruth, and many another, too; but I was always heedless; and when she was no longer near me, I forgot these things.”

The tears were chasing each other down the sick woman’s cheeks; and Ruth’s were flowing too, at the tender remembrance of her mother that her aunt’s recollections had called forth.

After a few minutes’ silence, her aunt said again, “Ruth, would you read to me a little? I think if I could hear the psalms and lessons, I should feel better.”

Ruth obeyed; and before she had finished, Davy crept into the room, and, as soon as her voice ceased, he said, “Come and sing, Ruth.”

“Yes, go to them poor things,” said her aunt, “and perhaps I will sleep a bit.”

Ruth went with Davy, and her first question, when she saw Tom nursing Rosa, was, “Where is Jessy?”

“In the sulks, I should think,” replied Tom, “she went upstairs long ago.”

“What was the matter?” saith Ruth, “I will go and see after her.”

“Nonsense,” grumbled Tom, “she will be here directly, most likely.”

But Ruth was not satisfied, and went upstairs. No Jessy was there. Nor was she in her mother’s room,

where Ruth peeped in, thinking she might have missed her, and in some alarm, she beckoned Tom, and told him.

"I don't know where she can be," said Tom, "unless she has gone after father."

Ruth was startled, and she went back to see if her walking clothes were missing. Neither the old straw bonnet with its faded trimming, nor the black stuff mantle that Jessy thought too shabby to be worn in the day-time were to be found, and Tom said, "She has gone, sure enough."

"Into the city by herself," cried Ruth, in horror. "Oh, Tom, if you know where she has gone, you must go after her as fast as you can."

"I have a pretty good guess," said Tom, "but I am not so sure that she would like to see me following her."

"Never mind that," said Ruth, "only find her, and keep near to her, at any rate."

And thus prompted, Tom set off to do what he had not energy enough to decide on for himself.

But Jessy had got a long start of him. After her father had gone out, she had sat, looking into the fire, and reflecting on the probability that he would come back intoxicated, cross, and penniless, as she knew he had done one Sunday night before, and at last the idea struck her that she would follow him, and try to persuade him to come back; and without a thought of the difficulty of persuading him, or the danger of such a step, she ran up stairs, got her cloak and bonnet, and stole out through the shop without disturbing any one.

The night was damp and misty, and the pavement slippery with mud, but Jessy scarcely heeded this, as she passed out of their own silent street, into the more noisy and frequented ones. She was quick enough, and having a good memory, she had soon acquired the facility that persons bred in London so often possess, of finding their way to any part of it; and fearlessly taking the shortest cuts, it was not long before she arrived at the tavern, where from words that she had heard him drop, she suspected that her father spent much time.

Now, for the first time, she stopped to consider how she was to proceed. All was quiet, she listened at the windows, but there was nothing to indicate even to the experienced ear of a policeman, that any revellers were inside. Jessy knocked timidly at the door, but there was no reply. She knocked again more loudly, and a barmaid appeared.

"Is Joseph Martin here, please?" asked Jessy.

"No, he is not," replied the young person, speaking in a loud key, and uttering every word distinctly.

"Has he been here, to-night?" asked Jessy again.

"I can't say, I'm sure, Miss," was the indifferent reply.

"A tall, thin man," said Jessy, interrogatively.

"We have no tall thin men here, my dear," answered the pert barmaid, getting impatient. "I am afraid you will have to go home again. Good night!" and without further ceremony, she banged the door in Jessy's face.

Very angry and indignant, Jessy turned away, but as she did not in the least believe the saucy barmaid,

she was unwilling to go away, and loitered near the door.

All at once, she heard a sound of voices in the passage, and the door being pushed violently open, she turned round expecting to see her father, but instead of him, three young men came out; as soon as they saw Jessy, they all gave a loud halloo, and rushed towards her. Without a moment's hesitation, Jessy took to her heels, and ran as swiftly as her nimble feet would carry her.

Quite pleased to find her so frightened, the three mischievous young men pursued her, setting up loud whoops, and shouts of laughter. They were gaining on her, when she turned the corner of a street, and ran into the arms of a policeman. He began rapidly to question her, but at first she could not speak. Meanwhile the young men cried out, "The Peeler's got her," and escaped as fast as they could. Then Jessy explained that they had only run after her, and the policeman, after seeing her into the right road, which, in her confusion, she had lost, left her, first advising her, in a sharp manner, to make the best of her way home, and not be wandering about at that time of night.

Jessy did not need a second warning, and she neither paused, nor looked round, until she reached her own door, when she went upstairs, flung off her bonnet, and sat down to have a good cry, after the troubles of her unsuccessful expedition.

At this time Ruth was in the next room with Davy, who had been tired, and had asked to go to bed. Occupied with him, Ruth had never heard Jessy's stealthy

step pass the door. Davy had been very silent all the evening, but as soon as he was alone with Ruth, he put his arms round her neck, and drawing her face close to his, whispered, "Ruth, is nobody blind but me?"

"Yes, my darling," said Ruth, kneeling down beside him; "there are many other people blind, both girls and boys, and men and women."

"And will they never see?" asked Davy, in a mournful voice.

"Perhaps not in this world, dear Davy," said his cousin; "but when they go to heaven they will see."

"But they will not see the sun, and the flowers, and their mother, will they, Ruth?" asked the boy, anxiously.

"In heaven, Davy," answered Ruth; "a sun shines for ever that is brighter far than ours; there shall be no night or darkness there, and eye hath not seen on earth the beautiful things that God's love has prepared. My mother is in heaven, Davy, and by God's mercy I shall see her there."

"How do you know about it, Ruth?" said Davy.

"God has said so in His Bible, and Jesus Christ, God's only son, once left His home in heaven, and came to earth to tell us so, and to die upon the cross, that God's just anger might be satisfied, and sinners who believed in Him might go to heaven."

"I used to say about Jesus Christ, in my prayers, when I was a little boy," said Davy. "What are sinners, Ruth?"

"People who do wrong. Almighty God hates sin, and no one who had ever done anything wrong could

have gone to heaven, if Jesus Christ had not shed his blood to cleanse them from their sin."

"Why did Jesus Christ shed His blood?" said Davy.

"Because He loved the world from the beginning, and He saw that nobody could ever get to heaven otherwise, because they all had sinned, so He came amongst us, and died for us, that we might live for ever, and He now sits at the right hand of God to hear our prayers, and to send the Holy Spirit to make us fit for heaven."

"Oh, Ruth," said little Davy, with the tears standing in his sightless eyes, "I am a bad boy often, will you tell me some prayers that I may get made fit for heaven."

Ruth said a simple prayer, which he repeated after her, kneeling down beside her, with his little hands upraised, and the Lord's Prayer, and then he lay down to sleep, but as Ruth kissed him, he said,

"Tell me again about the sun and no night, and no darkness;" so Ruth read to him the verses out of Revelation, and with a happy look of thankfulness and glad expectation, the blind Davy closed his eyes in sleep.

And it was then that Ruth, after raising her heart in praise for the light which she trusted had come down upon her cousin's heart, was leaving the room, when she heard sounds of grief proceeding from the next, and following them, she found Jessy sobbing on her bed. She went in with the idea of comforting the sorrow, whatever it might be, but Jessy jumped up at the first sound of her voice, stopped her sobbing, would answer no questions, and wiping her face hastily went down stairs. Ruth followed, and in the kitchen, to the

surprise of both the girls, sat the father in his usual chair, as if he had never been absent. He looked so moody that no one dared to speak to him, and very soon he took some supper, in the same silence, and then went to bed. Jessy, who was annoyed to find that her pains had been in vain, had a small skirmish with Tom upon the staircase, and then she too went to bed. And thus, in this godless family, the blessed Sunday closed.

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CHAPTER X.

“ When with dear friends sweet talk I hold,
And all the flowers of life unfold,
Let not my soul within me burn,
Except in all I Thee discern.”—KEBLE.

AND when another week began, Ruth felt as if she had been months instead of days amongst them. It was not an easy life that she had entered upon, and many a time her temper and her spirits were both sorely tried; but she was working in reliance on a strength that was better than her own; and with a sense of her responsibility in having been taught these better things, she set herself to be a comfort to her aunt, and a help to all the children. She often thanked Mrs. Philips to herself for having been so particular with her, and she took great pains to keep up all the careful habits that she had trained her in. Her person was as clean and neat as if she had been still the waiting-maid at Barnsley-fields; and whatever her hand found to do, whether it was washing, or cooking, or nursing, or comforting, she took care to do it with all her might.

And thus, although, when they became more accustomed to her, the children began to treat her with less respect; and, encouraged by Jessy, would sometimes resist her efforts to teach them better—yet she never would despair. Not even when Jessy, in her worst moods, thwarted her plans in every way, and by her dirty, idle ways, her jealousy, and her bad temper proved a constant hinder-

ance and temptation. Not even when her uncle, after staying out at night, would come in and vent his humour upon Ruth herself, did her patience fail, though this very patience seemed to irritate him. For there were beams of hope quite visible to her clear eye in the midst of all. A change, the sign of a good influence, was working gradually in the house. In the mother's heart the good seed had been revived, and in spite of weakness and sorrow, the sick-bed had become to her a place of heavenly teaching. And Davy was not suffered to forget the holy feelings of that Sunday night and morning; now the blind boy used to kneel and pray for light from Heaven, and in his growing meekness and unselfishness might be seen the traces of that light in him.

And as time wore on, other changes came. Mrs. Martin's illness, though it could not be cured, was softened by her own more hopeful state of mind, as well as by the cleanliness around her. Ted, was sent to a little school close by, and during most of the day there was one less to tease Rosa and make a noise; the little girl was taught her letters, and even, to her great delight, to use a pair of knitting-needles. Jessy's bonnet was newly trimmed with some coloured ribbons out of the large chest, and a new mantle was made for her out of a black skirt that Miss Philips had given Ruth to make a petticoat of. This kept Jessy in good humour for several days, and was the means of her beginning to go to church, and she now went regularly by turns with Ruth, taking one or more of the younger children.

Tom, too, was improved. He was more gentle, less given to tease Jessy, and was even disposed to be proud of his genteel-looking sister, when she appeared

in full dress on Sundays. He no longer sat moping in a corner, but would sometimes bring his "Penny Magazine," and read aloud to Ruth and Jessy as they worked. Thus Ruth felt that there was much to be thankful for. Perhaps her uncle caused her the greatest anxiety. It was plain that there was something on his mind, and she suspected that it was want of money, for nothing made him so cross as asking him for any. Her own little fund had vanished by degrees, to prevent asking him, and she was now waiting for the next quarter's payment of her little income. It arrived to the day, in a kind though brief letter from Joseph Turner, containing kindly messages from several friends in Haverleigh.

Ruth gave the order and the letter to her uncle, but she expected that he would return her a small sum, as had been agreed upon, for her own needs, and greatly was she disappointed, when, after a moment's hesitation, he put the whole into his pocket. She felt very sorrowful, as she thought of the many things she had intended to buy with the pound or two that she hoped to receive, but she was recalled to herself by a tear dropping on her hand. "What an old miser I am," she inwardly exclaimed, hastily wiping it away, "to cry for gold. I may be sure that uncle wants it very much, or he would not have kept it all; and if it makes him any happier, or does him any good, I need not regret it." It did seem to have done some good. For the next few days things went on more pleasantly. Her uncle was more cheerful, he stayed at home in the evenings, and kept Jessy in order. Her aunt, too, was so much better, that the doctor gave them hopes that she might soon be moved into a chair. Ruth was left in peace; but, in answering her good friend's

letter, the memory of her old home had been recalled, and she dwelt on the past with a regret which she could not quite extinguish.

One afternoon, about this time, she was sitting at her work, with Davy on a footstool at her feet, when Tom came up, with a sort of fuss in his manner that was quite unusual to him, and said, "Here is a friend of yours come to see you, Ruth."

Before Ruth had had time to think over all her friends, the friend that had come into her mind the very first appeared at the door. It was William Turner, and a warm flush of pleasure came into her face as she rose to welcome him. When she shook hands with him, her eye fell on the little workbox, his mother's gift to her, and the flush deepened on her cheek.

"You're surprised to see me here, Ruth," said William, as Tom, muttering something about not being able to leave the shop a minute, went down stairs again; "and I assure you I am not much less surprised myself. Master wanted something very important doing, in great haste, and he sent me. I arrived in London late last night, and have been busy all the morning, or I should have been here before. How well you are looking, Ruth."

"Am I?" was all her answer.

"Yes," said William; "but you're thinner. How does London air agree with you?"

"Why, you say I am looking well, William," said she, smiling.

"Yes, and I mean it too," said William; "but looking well is not always being well. You are quite pale again now."

"Pray don't take a report of my being pale and thin down with you," said Ruth. "I never was better in my life. How is your mother, William? Have you seen her lately?"

"Only yesterday," answered William. "I came round that way, and I have got a letter from her for you. I had just time to go over and get it—to see them, I mean. Who is this little fellow?" continued William, looking rather awkward, and pointing to Davy.

"Oh, have I not told you?" answered Ruth, touching her eyes as a sign. "This is my cousin Davy."

William gave a look of comprehension and of pity, and shook hands with Davy, whilst Ruth continued, "I must tell my poor aunt you're here. She is in the next room; and I will bring my pretty pet, little Rosa, to show you."

"Stop, Ruth," cried William, as she was going away. "Here is my mother's letter. Will you not read it now?"

Ruth turned back and took the letter, whilst William, without looking again at her, walked to the window, and stood there whistling, and beating the window-sill with his fingers, and making various impatient movements, until the rustling of the paper told that she had finished, and then he left off fidgeting, and hastening towards her, said,—

"Oh! Ruth, will you? If you knew how long I have loved you. All my life. You remember that black-berrying, Ruth, when you poured all your berries into lame Fanny's basket—I loved you then; and when you went to read every day to old Peggy, I loved you; when Bill Jackson made you fall over the string in the lane,

and you got up and said, 'Don't be frightened, Bill, I am no worse; only pray don't do it again, for some one might be badly hurt, and then I know you would never forgive yourself,' I loved you, Ruth; and I loved you when you sat all day sewing at those hard seams for widow Johnson, when she had sprained her thumb—you see I know all you did, though you might not think it; and I loved the tears that you shed for your poor mother, and the smiles that you kept for them that were kind to you. Oh! Ruth, as I have planed my wood, I have thought of you; when my master praised me, I was glad, because I thought it made me more fit for you; and now I am out of my time, I have got high wages and a good prospect before me, and everything I want but you. Ruth, will you be my wife?"

Ruth was still holding the letter in one hand, whilst Davy held fast the other; but she now raised her eyes, and began, "Thank you, kindly, William;" but she could get no further, a host of recollections had rushed upon her with his words, and she burst into tears.

William took her hand with joy as he received the implied consent; but he said no more until she had recovered herself, then he was about to speak again, when Davy, who had been listening intently, now came close to Ruth, and said, earnestly,—

"Do not leave us, Ruth."

"There, William," said she, "you see how selfish I have been, only thinking of my own happiness, and forgetting the poor children. I am afraid they cannot spare me till Jessy is a few years older."

"Oh! Ruth," said William, "I should like to catch you being selfish; but where is your aunt? Mother said

I had better see her first; but I could not help speaking to you."

"I will go and see if aunt can see you," answered Ruth; "she always lies in bed, poor thing."

"Don't go just yet," said William, changing his mind when he found himself nearly losing sight of her; "I have told you nothing scarcely;" and he made her sit down again, and began to tell her all his hopes and wishes for the future; how his father and mother had blessed him and bade him prosper, for they desired nothing better than for him to marry Ruth; and how in about a year's time he expected to settle for himself, and then he should come to claim her, and bring her to a home that should be furnished and made comfortable with his savings; and so quickly did the time pass in these bright dreamings, that Jessy came in at the end of an hour, and it seemed as if they had only just begun to talk.

Then William started up, for he had to meet a person in the city, and it only wanted a few minutes to the appointed hour, and with only time for shaking hands with Jessy and a parting word to Ruth, saying that he would return in the evening to speak to her aunt and uncle, he hurried off.

And Ruth remained by the window, trying to think quietly over the events of the afternoon, till she was roused by little Davy's voice at the door. "Please, Ruth, come to mother;" and Ruth went with speed, fearing that something was amiss; but her aunt was lying still as usual, only with an unwonted flush upon her cheek.

When Ruth came near to her, she put her arm round

her, and drawing her with gentle force towards her, kissed her, and whispered, "Davy has betrayed your secrets, dear; send them away, and tell me all about it." And when she had listened to the tale, she said, "May God bless you, my dear. I believe that you have made a wise choice. William Turner comes of a good stock, and from all I have heard of him, he is fitted to make you happy; but I do not know what we shall do without you;" and a tear rolled down her pallid cheek.

"I shall not leave you, dear aunt, till you are stronger. I have told William that, and he is content; at least, he is willing to wait. It is much better that it should be so; we are both young enough yet, and I might only be a hinderance to him till he gets well settled in his business."

Whilst Ruth was speaking, her uncle came in, and she would have moved away, but her aunt held her hand, and before she could stir, told her husband what had occurred. It was not a fortunate moment. John Martin had come home in a bad humour, and thinking only of the loss that Ruth and her money would be to the family, his first feeling was one of vexation, and he would have perhaps refused his consent altogether, had not an imploring look from his wife made him pause for a moment. A sign from her made Ruth leave the room, and then she contrived to bring him so far round, that although he protested that it was absurd to think of two such children settling in the world, he consented to see the young man, and hear what he had to say.

Meanwhile, Jessy had been questioning Davy, and had got a pretty good knowledge of what had passed. She

was now divided between the pleasure of being the possessor of such a piece of news, and jealousy of Ruth's share in it; but the former feeling prevailed, and her first words to her cousin, when she came in, were a request that she might be the bridesmaid. Ruth blushed, and laughed a merry little laugh, before she answered,—

“ It has not come to choosing bridesmaids yet, Jessy ; that is a long way off, but I don't think I should go past you and Rosa. Did you buy the tea? Aunt thinks she could take a cup ! ”

About seven o'clock, William came again. He had a long talk in the shop with Mr. Martin, whose really kind heart could not withstand William's frank, honest manner ; and as William said that he was willing to wait a twelvemonth, he consoled himself by thinking that very likely something might come to stop it then, and giving a reluctant consent to the engagement, he brought William up stairs, where he soon made friends with all the family.

The children were all pleased with their new acquaintance. Rosa liked him as a funny playfellow, and also because she found that his pockets could produce acid-drops and other goodies. Ted was happy in the promise of being taken some day to see the Thames Tunnel, and sail home in the steam-boat. Davy was soothed by the whispered pledge, that when Ruth did leave them, he should often go and visit her ; and Jessy was pleased at being treated almost like a woman by this civil, pleasant-looking friend of her cousin's.

Tom alone regarded him with suspicion ; he did not think that anybody could be good enough for Ruth, and he watched young Turner narrowly. But Ruth did not

perceive this; she looked at William, and listened to his sensible conversation with her uncle with honest pride, and she was satisfied, since her aunt was pleased with him, and the evening was a very happy one to her.

When it grew late, William took his leave, for he had to set off again early in the morning. Her aunt, thinking they might have something more to say to each other, sent Ruth to open the shop-door for him, and William took this opportunity to ask Ruth to give him her promise to marry him, for certain, at the end of the year.

"I cannot, William," she said, "till my aunt is stronger, or Jessy is quite able to take my place." And she kept firm to this; but she agreed to write once a fortnight, and William was obliged to be content.

"I shall go back to my work a happier man than I came from it, and the remembrance of this day will sweeten all my labour; and, by God's blessing, every day shall see me trying to make myself more worthy of you."

Ruth blushed deeply as she listened to these kind and partial words. Then William drew out a small prayer-book, very prettily bound, but so small that she could easily put it into her pocket, and begged her to accept it, with his love. In his clear, good hand, he had written her name at the beginning, and the following verse: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

"Shall it not be so, dear Ruth?" he said, as her eyes filled with tears, and she could scarcely thank him for the present. "I thought I would put that, to show you always that my purpose is the same as yours, and, by the help of God, we will keep to it. And now I have just one thing more to ask of you, before I say good-

bye," continued William, whilst Ruth looked up in surprise; "will you promise me, that if any trouble comes upon you, you will send me word directly?"

"Nay, William," said Ruth, smiling, "we will not talk about trouble to-day." As she spoke, a vision of dirty kitchens, untidy children, drunken fathers, and malicious Jessies rose before her; but she still smiled, and added, "I am not afraid; little troubles I must have, but there will be none that are not good for me."

"Well, but, Ruth," persisted William, "you have not any kin so close to you as I shall be, and if any great trouble came to you, it would be me that would have a right to help you;" and he made her promise, and then he went away.

Poor Ruth! a stout heart will do a great deal towards making troubles seem less burdensome, but it will not keep them off entirely; and from the day of William Turner's visit they seemed to thicken round her.

As we said before, there was much jealousy in the feelings with which Jessy looked upon the change in her cousin's prospects; and when she heard her father grumble at the idea of losing Ruth, because, as he said, she was the only useful person in the house, her envy knew no bounds. She looked at everything in an ill-tempered light, and regarded Ruth's gentle remonstrances or playful directions as intended to insult or triumph over her. Like many another girl who has never looked earnestly into her own heart or tried to control her temper, Jessy was a constant self-tormentor, and uncomfortable as she was able to make other people, she was still more unhappy herself.

CHAPTER XI.

"Soldiers of the Cross, be strong ;
Watch and war, 'mid fear and pain,
Daily conquering woe and wrong,
Till our king o'er earth shall reign."
WINKLER, 1703.

THE Sunday after the events we have been describing had been looked forward to all the week by Ruth, for on this day she hoped to attain an object for which she had long been innocently scheming. This was to prevail upon her uncle to go with them to church. Generally on this holy day he got up very late, thus making the sacred day one of slothful indulgence of the animal parts of his nature, instead of arousing his soul to throw off the trammels of worldly business, and to enjoy the peaceful enjoyments of prayer and praise, in which alone the true rest can be found. Getting up late usually made him cross ; and after scolding Jessy, if she was the one at home, or grumbling at anything that came in his way, whether it was a chair or little Rosa, he would stroll out into the streets, return to dinner in the same listless mood, and sometimes—this had happened every Sunday lately—would disappear soon after tea and not return till midnight.

But the last Sunday there had been a heavy thunder-storm, in which even he could not dare to venture out ; and his wife suffering from the nervous fear of thunder to which many invalids are subject, he stayed beside her

all the afternoon, soothing her with something of his former gentleness.

In the evening, as the rain continued, he took his pipe out, and began to smoke—a habit that he had only acquired latterly—and Ruth, who had been at church in the afternoon with Tom, having set off before the storm began, now went into her aunt's room, to read the lessons with her, as had become her custom.

Davy was there as usual, sitting at one side of the bed, with his hand locked in his mother's, and Ruth sat down at the other, with the Bible and a candle on a little round stand before her.

As she was devoutly going to begin the second lesson, her uncle came into the room; Ruth stopped an instant, but her aunt laid her hand on her arm, saying, "Go on, Ruth;" and then, with an anxious look at her husband, "You'll like to hear her, won't you, John?"

He had been touched with his wife's weakness in the afternoon, by her nervous fear, her struggles against it, her ejaculations to Heaven, and her endeavours to rely on God's good providence through it all; and long-buried feelings had been wakening in his heart, preparing the way for the Divine Word to enter, and he now quietly sat down in Davy's place, taking the child upon his knee, and listened. Then Ruth read on, in her clear, careful tones, striving to receive and mark the wisdom as she read; and the promises of protection to those who trusted, and the exhortations to live as those who sought a heavenly reward, fell sweetly from her humble lips.

When she had finished, no one spoke, until her uncle, half ashamed of the effect the chapter had had on him, said, in an indifferent sort of tone, "You are a good

reader, Ruth ; I shouldn't mind hearing you every Sunday night."

A gleam of pleasure passed over his sick wife's face, and she took his hand, and said, "It has been a great comfort to me, John, to hear her, and I like it better when you are by ; it reminds me of the time when we used to hear it at church together long ago."

"Ay, honey," replied her husband, looking fondly at her, "it is a long time since you and I have been at church together."

"Father," said Davy, putting his little arm round his father's neck, to bend his face down closer, "will you go to church with Tom and Ruth and me ? then you can tell mother about it—will you, father ?"

"We'll see," replied his father ; and Ruth got up to leave the room, but she listened anxiously as she went out, and the last she heard was a consenting "Well," to Davy's urgent "Next Sunday, will you, father ?"

So next Sunday Ruth rose early, in a state of expectation. To-day she trusted that the head of the house, the father, would enter the courts of the Lord and hear the blessed tidings of salvation, and what blessed fruits might not be further hoped for.

The first step was to get him up in time. Her knocking was unheeded, so she sent Rosa in to rouse her father gently, and tell him it was nearly breakfast-time, and then she employed all her energies to make the fire bright, the breakfast comfortable, and all things suitable for such a holy day. Unluckily, on this very morning Jessy had "got up on the wrong side of the bed," as the vulgar saying is, which means that she was in a very bad humour, and did not care who saw it.

Long after all the others had come down, with hair uncombed and dress awry Jessy made her first appearance. Ruth had set the breakfast-table with her usual neatness, the old cups and saucers shone with cleanliness and were placed quite straight. The milk-jug and the sugar stood before them, and a large new loaf was flanked by a piece of fresh salt butter. The tea-pot was not there, because they were going to have coffee for a treat, and it was to watch the boiling up of this that Ruth's neat figure was now bending near the fire. Ted was lacing his best boots; Davy was sitting on his stool, watching or rather listening to Ruth's movements, putting in a word or question now and then; and Tom was brushing carefully his father's coat.

"Good morning, Miss Martin," said the latter, making a low bow to Jessy; "I hope you have not hurried yourself."

"Jessy, would you reach me that small cup?" said Ruth, feeling, though her back was turned, the scowl that was preceding Jessy's cross reply.

"What cup?" said Jessy, knowing that Ruth was holding the coffee-pot on the fire, and could not leave it to help herself; and then, without troubling herself to look where she knew it would be, she asked, "What's got Rosa?"

"She has gone to waken father," said Davy; "father's going to church to-day, to-day," and he sung the last words joyfully.

Meanwhile Ruth was patiently holding the coffee-pot, not liking to get the cup herself, and scarcely to ask again for it; but she was just beginning, "Jessy, please," when Tom presented the cup to her, saying, mockingly, "With Miss Martin's compliments."

"Don't tease, Tom," said Ruth, half-smiling, half-reproachfully.

"Oh! thank you, Ruth," said Jessy, scornfully; "I can defend myself quite well when I want."

"We don't doubt that," said Tom; "everybody knows what a Billingsgate tongue you have."

"Now, Tom," began Jessy, growing very red, "we don't want any of your impudence, so you may just let me alone, and mind your brushing; though I can tell you that you needn't make that ready for father, for if Ruth thinks she's going to make him do just as she likes, she is mistaken, with her mean, hypocritical ways."

"Hold your tongue, Jessy," said Tom, getting angry, in his turn; "you may abuse me as much as you like, but I won't stand to hear you storm at Ruth."

"Hush, Tom, hush," said Ruth, in a low tone; "you shouldn't have provoked your sister."

"Provoked me, has he?" cried Jessy, turning in a furious passion upon Ruth; "yes; and who did he want to please by that, do you think? Who did he know it would please, do you think?"

At this moment Davy, who had been listening with a sorrowful face, got up, and planted himself in front of Ruth, as if to protect her. This enraged Jessy more than ever, and exclaiming, "And you, too, must stick to her!" she seized Davy by the arm, and, with a rough twist, thrust him on one side, saying, "There will be no one good enough to live in the house with her soon."

But this was too much for Ruth, she could not see Davy ill-treated, and drawing herself up, she calmed herself by a moment's thought, and then said, "Jessy, you must not go on in this way; you are unjust to me, and

cruel to poor Davy. You love him dearly ; Davy knows you do, and that you did not wish to hurt him ; but you must not grieve the child by saying any more such angry things."

Tom had sprung forward as if to seize hold of Jessy ; he had stopped when he heard Ruth's voice, but he was going to break in now, had not Ruth checked him by saying, in a determined manner, " Now, Tom, let us have no more. You began this subject, and I beg that you will finish it."

Fortunately for the diversion of all their thoughts, little Rosa now came in, and, in her lisping tongue, told them that her father was getting up.

" That is right, Rosie," said Ruth ; " then suppose you come and sit on my knee, and hear Ted and Davy say their catechism. Come, boys, you will have time before father is dressed, and you know you have it all to learn, to say to your mother when she is well enough to hear it."

This had been Ruth's morning task for many Sundays, and the two little boys could say more than half of it already. Rosa always listened to them, and said the Lord's Prayer when it came to her turn.

Davy had not cried aloud, but he had looked grieved and vexed, and had kept rubbing his arm, but now he brightened up a little, and came and stood before his cousin. Thus the storm had ceased, and Tom and Jessy had subsided into quietness. Tom had gone back to his brushing, and Jessy, who was really much ashamed of herself, went to the shelves, and, partly to hide her confusion, began to tumble the books and odd things about.

Ruth saw her making confusion where all had been order, but she said to herself, " I can soon make it

straight again;" and turning her back, so that she might not be obliged to catch sight of Jessy's movements, gave her whole attention to the little boys.

"Never can find anything now-a-days," was Jessy's grumbling comment as she moved about the room; at last she came near Ruth, and said, angrily, "I wonder who has hid my prayer-book."

"Hush, wait a minute, Ted," said Ruth; "you put your prayer-book away with your bonnet, last Sunday, Jessy; don't you recollect? Then you said it would be ready for the next time."

"I don't think I did," muttered Jessy; but she left the room to fetch it.

She had no sooner gone than Tom began, "Now, really, Ruth."

"Hush, Tom," interrupted his cousin. "Do oblige me. I want to teach the children, and I cannot do it if you talk to me;" so Tom held his tongue.

Jessy was back in pretty quick time, suspecting that they might be talking about her; and then, when she came back and saw them quietly engaged as she had left them, she was made crosser than ever by her own unjust suspicions. For a few minutes she sat down, and the little boys repeated after Ruth the answers to their questions; but she could not be quiet, there is no peace for the victim of bad temper, and muttering something about the cold, she seized the poker, and, with one clumsy turn, covered Ruth's clean hearth with ashes.

Ruth felt angry, and with an effort she repeated the beginning of the next answer.

Jessy stirred again, the poker fell from her hands, and the coffee-pan, which stood upon the fender, was

overturned, and the contents spilled upon the well-scoured hearth.

"To love my neighbour as myself," repeated Davy's sweet, soft voice.

"Oh, Jessy, what a pity!" said Ruth, trying to drown Tom's angry exclamation. "That will do for this morning, boys; we must stop now. Here, Jessy, get the floorcloth, and let us sop it up. How did it happen?"

Jessy got the cloth, but discarded any help. "I can do it myself," she said, sulkily.

"Very well," said Ruth; "then I will be making some more. There is just as much coffee as will do."

And it was fortunate; for, if they had only had tea, the smell would quickly have betrayed the accident.

And now, where were all Ruth's grand preparations for her uncle's comfort? Jessy had contrived to move and unsettle everything in the room, even to the breakfast-things upon the table; the fire was no longer bright, the once clean hearth was wet and dirty, the children were frightened, Tom was vexed, and some pennyworths of coffee wasted.

Ruth felt it all with the keenness of one who loved good order, and she was decidedly cross, as, keeping out of Jessy's way as much as she could, and longing to snatch from her hand the mop that she was handling so awkwardly, she began to make the coffee. She took the kettle up with a jerk, and thought, "How tiresome Jessy is! I cannot bear this kind of thing much longer; I shall speak my mind plainly to her some day." But this was only for a moment. Soon she was saying to herself, "You are forgetting your Christian calling, Ruth. You are becoming quite wrapped up in earthly

cares. Your charity is failing. You have forgotten that each little trial rightly used is but a step to heaven. Jessy did not mean it; Tom vexed her. She is a little improved; she will be still better by-and-by. It was very bad to feel so impatient with her;" and then, with a heart raised far above her occupation, Ruth watched her second pot of coffee.

Before it was ready, her uncle lounged into the room, as he generally appeared now on Sunday mornings, unshaven, and without coat and shoes.

"What now! Here's a mess!" he exclaimed. "A pretty waste and dirt, indeed; who has been at work here, eh?"

Rosa was beginning to cry out, "Jessy threw it down, fader," but Ruth interrupted her.

"It was a little accident, uncle; we are very sorry. Another time we will be more careful."

"Careful, indeed!" replied her uncle; "You needn't talk about care, with all that good coffee spilt, and Jessy wiping it up as if her fingers were all thumbs. Leave it alone, Jessy, you can make it no better. A dirty mess it is, and a dirty mess it will be."

When the father spoke in this angry tone no one durst reply; Jessy slunk away, and the children stood quite still. Tom only placed his father's chair with its back towards the catastrophe, while Ruth with much dexterity straightened the things on the table, motioned the children to their seats, and poured out two cups of steaming coffee.

"Will you take your mother's breakfast, Jessy?" she then said, quietly, and without a shade of resentment in

her voice. Jessy complied in silence, and all went on as usual.

Before they had finished, a merry peal burst in through the open window.

"There are the bells," cried Davy, joyfully.

"Hold your tongue," said his father; and the child was silent, but the bells now rang reproachfully; at least so John Martin might have felt, for when he had finished his breakfast he pushed away his cup, and, walking to the window, said, "Come here, Davy, there are some swallows in a nest under the roof, you can hear them chirping."

And with his little heart full of pleasure, Davy ran up and listened to the gentle twittering. And soon they went together into the mother's room, where they thought that they could see, or at least, so far as poor Davy was concerned, could hear them better.

Meanwhile Ruth was clearing away, and Jessy was slowly pretending to help her, when all at once, she set down a jug she had in her hand, and saying, "It must be time to get ready for church," walked across the room.

"Are you going, Jessy?" asked Ruth, in some surprise, for they had always kept to their turns, except when Jessy had been too lazy to go, and Ruth could scarcely believe that she was in earnest.

"To be sure I am," said Jessy, at the door; "I am of no use at home, you know, so I may as well be at church."

"Nay, Jessy," answered Ruth; "you are mistaken in thinking that you could be of no use at home; but if you wish to go to church this morning, you are quite

welcome. And will you take Davy up with you? I will come and help you presently."

Then Ruth took her uncle some warm water and his well-brushed coat, as a hint for him to remember what he had promised.

Tom was putting on his bright Sunday boots, when she came back, but he raised his head directly, and said, "Well, Ruth, I can't tell how you can bear being put upon in that impudent fashion. If it was not for fear of disturbing mother, I would go upstairs now, and give her such a blowing up as she never had in her life before."

"Oh, Tom," said Ruth, for once looking very grave, "indeed it grieves me to hear you speak in that way of your sister. She is a fine girl, though she is certainly very hasty, but she has been brought forward too much with my poor aunt's illness."

"Why, Ruth, that is good," exclaimed Tom, "for you to be making excuses for her, when she has been doing nothing but plague you from the moment that she sulked downstairs till now when she is going to church for nothing but to vex you; but you shall go too. I'll stop at home. I can do the dinner very well, and you shall see how finely I will manage Rosa and my mother."

"Thank you, Tom," said Ruth; "I am much obliged to you, but I could not have you to stay at home instead of me. It would never do to leave my aunt without one of us girls within her call. But, Tom, you must let me say one thing; if Jessy did come down sulky, as you say, that was no time to begin making fun of her, as you did, when she was ready to be vexed at anything."

"It is too bad of you to take me up in that way, Ruth," said Tom, quite crossly; "as if I was the only one to blame. You want everybody to measure their words as you do yourself, and that's impossible."

"I only want you to be kind to Jessy, Tom. She has a temper that needs kindness; she looks up to you as her elder brother, and she feels a word from you more than from anybody."

"I didn't know that," said Tom, considering; "but one thing I do know," added he, with energy; "I know that you are far too good to live amongst such as us, so the sooner William Turner takes you away the better; and then we can go back to our dirt and misery, and get poorer and poorer every day, as anybody can see that we should do if it were not for you."

"Oh, Tom!" said Ruth, half hurt by his words, which she took as irony, but touched by his earnest manner.

"Yes, Ruth," he continued, speaking quickly, "anybody may see that we're going to ruin as fast as may be: bills upon bills to pay for shoes got long ago; no one scarcely coming to the shop, because we can't keep up the stock, and supply them with what they want, father taking to drinking, and mother ill, and Jessy helpless, and you going to leave us. There, you have it all; but I'll not stay to be a burden, I'll be off;" and Tom put his arm upon the mantel-shelf, and leaned his head upon it, as if exhausted by his own vehemence. Ruth was so shocked and startled that she did not speak for some minutes, then she went up to her cousin, and laying her hand upon his arm, said gently,—

"It is a bad case, Tom; I had no idea that things

had gone so far. I am very grieved, but we must do something. I am strong; I can work more than I do; and you, Tom, you must not talk of going away, at least just now; if your father is in difficulties, you must stay and help him through. We will talk about it afterwards. Now, I must go and dress the children, poor little things; and Jessy, too, Tom, we must try and make her fit to bear up against trouble, if it is coming so badly as you say." Then Ruth was going away, but she turned back, and added, "Go to church with her, Tom, and with your father, if he will, and say your prayers together, and try to find comfort there. It is the only way. Seek those things first—you know what I mean, Tom—and all other things will be added. No trouble will seem so hard then; and whatever comes, you may feel sure that you will be helped through it all."

Tom did not answer, and Ruth went up stairs to get Ted and Davy ready. They had to go without their father—a sad disappointment to more than one of them; but Ruth knew where to seek for comfort under every disappointment, and when she had finished the few things that would have been left for Jessy to do, she sat down quietly, and taking the word of strength and wisdom, she joined in spirit with the multitude of worshippers in earth and heaven, to learn and praise and pray.

CHAPTER XII.

“Be still and trust;
“For His strokes are strokes of love
Thou must for thy profit bear;
He thy filial love would move:
Trust thy Father’s loving care—
Be still and trust.”—AUTON ULRICH.

TOM had not exaggerated the evils that his sagacious mind had for some time foreseen. His father’s affairs were indeed in a bad state. Ruth had a quiet talk with him as they came from church that afternoon, and she was shocked at the prospect that he showed her. The crowning point in the trouble was that some heavy bills were to become due next week, and there were no means at all to meet them. No wonder that the father slunk about as if ashamed to let the daylight shine upon him, and not much wonder either if, without any strength but his own to lean upon, he sought to drown his cares in drinking. Day after day he became more gloomy, and the smallest demand for money put him into a passion. The next time the doctor came, he said that Mrs. Martin had gone back, that she was not so well: could it be otherwise when her husband’s brow was always clouded, and when Davy even, sometimes, would creep to her bed-side for shelter from his father’s anger?

At last the day came on which the bills were due. The father went out the first thing in the morning, and never came in again all day. An uneasy feeling crept

over the whole household. It was all that Ruth could do to quiet her own fears, and prevent the children from running to their mother with their painful questions.

Tom kept things going on down stairs as usual, and answered the inquiries for his father as well as he could. Jessy, who had never been friends with Ruth or Tom since the quarrel of that Sunday, would not own her anxiety, or ask the others where they thought her father was; but she looked wretched, and shed some tears when she thought they could not see her. And the day wore on, but at tea-time a new trouble came. They found that they had neither milk nor sugar in the house, and every penny had been spent during the week, when they had been living with the greatest care. The young ones could easily have done without, but the mother's cup of tea must not seem different from usual.

"Jessy," said Ruth, in a low tone; "what shall we do—the sugar is finished, and we have no money? It will grieve your mother so!"

Jessy was pleased to be consulted, but she would not appear so, and only said, "She must know, sooner or later, I suppose, so it don't much matter now."

"We must keep it from her to-night though, if we can," said Ruth. "Tom may have sold something this afternoon, would you step down and ask him?"

"It is no use my asking Tom anything," was on Jessy's lips, but a better feeling checked her words, and she went down stairs.

Tom was busy with a pencil and paper, and seemed to be making a list of the articles in the shop.

"Tom," said Jessy, "Ruth wants to know if you have any money."

"Not a farthing," answered Tom; "what does she want it for?"

"To get sugar and milk for mother's tea. Can't we buy some, and pay for it to-morrow?"

"We shan't have anything to pay with to-morrow," said Tom, gloomily.

Jessy did not answer. A chill came over her; her breath seemed to stop. This must be, indeed, poverty; but she could not understand it, and the uncertainty made it worse. In a husky voice she said,—

"Tom, where's father?"

"I don't know," said Tom.

"Has he left us?"

"I don't know," said Tom, again. "Go back to Ruth; if anybody can help you children, she can. I must be off and doing something if he doesn't come back by to-morrow; we'll wait till then."

"Jessy, Jessy!" called Ruth's clear voice in a low tone on the stairs.

Jessy ran, and met Ruth at the staircase-door.

"Look here," said Ruth, "I have found these stamps, —you might get the things with them, I think; you won't mind trying, will you? or I could go myself."

"No, no," said Jessy, quite touched, for she knew what purpose the stamps had been bought for; "I can go, but you want these for yourself."

"No," said Ruth, smiling, "I have kept one for that;" and Jessy quickly got her bonnet, and going to a shop where she was not known, she managed to make the exchange she needed.

When their mother had been served with everything as usual, the rest sat down to their watery tea, and the

end of a stale loaf. Ruth did not make it much less, but she helped the others, and gave them what they needed quite as much—smiles and cheering words. The meal was scanty,—but worse than its scantiness was the doubt where they might procure another. Poverty was near to them that night, and a dread of even worse than poverty was on them all.

It was a long evening to the elder ones, as hour after hour passed by, and no father returned. They had contrived to keep Mrs. Martin quiet during the day with the idea, which was still possible, that her husband might have gone to a leather-currier's at some distance; and they sent Rosa to her now, hoping that the innocent prattle of the child might divert her mind from dwelling on his absence. But every device failed; the mother got more uneasy,—until at last, when the children had been put to bed, and Tom, after shutting up the shop, went out to try and hear some tidings of his father, she ceased to conceal her fears, and said, "Ruth, something must have happened, he never stayed out a whole day before;" and soon she lost all control; and breaking out into piteous lamentations, declared that she would get up and go herself to seek him. Poor thing, she who had not stood alone for months.

Jessy was so frightened that she cried and made her mother worse; but Ruth, although she was much alarmed, contrived to retain her calmness; and putting her arms gently, but firmly, round her, said, "Aunt, my uncle will be here at bed-time; and just think how it would grieve him to find that he had made you worse. Tom has gone out to see about him. He is a fine steady lad, is Tom,—worthy to be your eldest, isn't he, aunt. He is sure to

find out where his father is, if anybody can. Now, dear aunt, lie down. There, that is right; I have smoothed your pillow nicely. You will be patient, dear aunt, will you not? and if you will let me, I will read you the chapter that uncle liked so much last Sunday week. It teaches us not to be afraid in trouble, aunt,—and we are in trouble now.”

By her gentle force and coaxing she made her aunt lie down again; and when she was quite still, Ruth softly read to her, and the holy words seemed to fall like peaceful balm. When the chapter was done, she could pray and wait, still holding Ruth’s hand, and sometimes speaking soothingly to Jessy, who still cried helplessly beside her. At last, breaking the silence, a little sound was heard below, the turning of a key, and then a step upon the stairs. Their breath stopped as they listened; there was more than one step surely. But whoever they were, they turned into the kitchen, and all was still again.

This was more than the anxious wife could bear.

“Go, Ruth, quick, see who it is,” she said. But before Ruth could reach the door, the handle turned, and Tom stood before them, pale and careworn.

“Your father?” gasped Ruth, in a whisper.

“All right, he is here,” was Tom’s reply. “How is mother?”

“Oh, Tom, she has been so frightened,” whispered Ruth, again. But she now saw her uncle standing behind him; and seizing his hand with a joyful grasp, she pulled him into the room; then going to her aunt, she cried, “Thank God, aunt, here he is!”

His poor wife had been burying her face in the pillow,

sick with anxiety, yet dreading to hear; but now she raised her face, to see her husband standing in a timid, half ashamed, yet longing attitude beside her. The thin arms were spread out, he bent down to them; but, as she put them round him, she could only cry and sob piteously.

Where Tom had found his despairing father, from what he saved him, Ruth and Jessy never knew; it was enough for them that the day of horrible uncertainty was over, and that the father was at home. When the girls had left them, John Martin sought to calm his wife; and when he had in part succeeded, he said to her, "Sarah, can you forgive me? I have caused you many an anxious day, though may-be never such a one as this must have been to you; but now, if God gives me strength for it, I will be a different man. Will you pray for me, Sarah? I am not worthy to pray myself."

"There is a worthiness, dear John, prepared for all," said his wife, "in the merits of our Saviour; else we none of us might pray. You remember how my father used to close each night at home,—I have the book beside me now; let us have the children in, and then, in His name who has promised to be with two or three, we will pray together."

And thus, on the evening of the day that had been to one of them so full of sin, as well as sadness, the first family prayers were offered in John Martin's house; and in the midst of care and poverty, a ray of comfort had come in. When the little ones heard next morning that their father had come home, they were in great haste to be dressed, and ran to meet him as if he had been absent for a month. Ted ran up to him with noisy glee; Rosa

must be taken in his arms ; whilst Davy, after Ruth had led him down, was content to hold fast by his father's hand.

But round the mother's bed again, their little voices were hushed by the sound of prayer. The young ones wondered, but Davy crept up to Ruth when it was over, and whispered with an anxious look, "Ruth, is father going to get made fit for heaven too?"

"By God's help, I hope so, dear," was Ruth's reply ; and then he said,—

"I am so glad,—will you tell me something to be thankful in?"

She sat down beside him, and repeated part of the 103rd Psalm, and he learnt the first two verses, and said them with his little heart quite full of love and praise.

But from this sweet employment, Ruth was recalled by the necessity of providing for the breakfast. The things were all set ready, but there was no bread ; and Ruth felt that her uncle must be told of their necessity. She had heard of poor people selling their property, or putting it in pawn ; but she resolved that as long as her hands could earn sufficient for their need, they should not be driven to that resource, and work she would seek this day. But in the mean time they needed bread ; so beckoning her uncle out of the room, she asked him if he had any money ?

"My poor children !" he exclaimed, putting his hand up to his forehead, "here is a shilling ; all I have to feed them with ; and perhaps I should not call that mine. Oh, Ruth, you do not know what I have been,—how I have neglected my business till it has gone to ruin, and

how I have spent all my gains and your money too, Ruth, at the public-house or at the card-table. But that is over now; I am thankful that I am spared to show that I am changed—would that I alone had to bear the consequences of my folly!”

“Nay, uncle,” she replied, “you must think the trouble lighter when there are so many to take part in it. Do not despair. God will help us, if we trust in Him, and He will bless our labours. Before this shilling is spent, I trust that we shall have found the means of earning more.”

Bread was bought, and a blessing asked before it was eaten; but when breakfast was over, they all felt that a change had come upon their life.

The bailiffs were in the house, and Tom was no longer needed there; Ted was told he was not to go to school; and Ruth and Jessy had no dinner to make ready.

Ruth had, however, a project in her head, which she hastened to propose to her uncle, for she was impatient to put it into practice. This was to obtain the money that she had in the Savings-bank, to relieve him from his present difficulties, and she only waited for his consent before she wrote to Mrs. Turner on the subject.

“No Ruth,” said her uncle, decidedly, “I have robbed you enough already. I could not take your father’s careful savings, nor could I bear that my distress should be noised about in Haverleigh, that all might know what a wretch your uncle was.”

“I am sure,” said Ruth, “Mr. Turner never would——”

“Thank you; say no more. I would not take your money; and, Ruth, I should not like them to know anything about it. It seems like selfishness; but if they

did, that young man would come and take you away from us at once. But this is truly selfish of me, Ruth, when it would be so much better for you. You had better go."

"Oh, uncle, can you think it?" said Ruth. "I said I would not marry for a year at least, and I will not. My only fear is that I may be a burden to you, but there will be the rent coming in the spring again; and until then, I think I could do something to help to keep us all. Now, please don't say anything against it, uncle. We must all do our best now; and I assure you it is the only way in which I could be happy. But Tom is waiting to speak to you."

It was the bailiffs entering the execution.

Now, Ruth, in the midst of all this anxiety, had one little trouble of her own. This was the day on which she had to write to William. She had promised, and the letter had been written before at different times, and the stamp saved the night before was to free this letter.

But now, before she sent it, she wished to make up her mind as to whether her promise to William would oblige her to relate the occurrences of the last day or two. Her candid mind revolted from concealment, and her desire was to repose entire confidence in William; but she recollected that her uncle had desired that it might not be mentioned, and as the trouble was not her own, she resolved that at present she would not allude to it.

And then she went out to post her letter. But as she was putting her bonnet and neat mantle on, her eye fell on a shawl that she rarely used, and the thought struck her that she would take that to some more respectable-

looking pawnbroker's, and raise some money on it. She felt degraded by the idea: but then what else could be done? and she determined that, afterwards she would lose no time in seeking work. If she could not get sewing, she would hire herself out by day to clean or get up linen.

So she hung the old shawl across her arm, and set out on her expedition. As she went along, she tried to arrange her plans, but the difficulty of procuring employment in a place like London, where she was quite unknown, would be very great, she knew. The Martins had made few friends in London, and since the mother's illness, and the straitening of their circumstances, these few had dropped off; and as Ruth dropped her letter into a post-office that she was passing, she thought how lonely a person might be in a city full of people, and kind people too, as many of them seem to be, she said to herself, as she noticed a benevolent-looking gentleman, who held by the hand a handsome, well-dressed girl about ten or eleven years old.

"Oh! grandpapa," cried the young lady, as they were passing Ruth, "there is the very book that I have been longing for. See, dear grandpapa," she added, in a coaxing way.

"Well, well, I suppose I must buy it for you," said the old gentleman, leading her into the shop, with a pretended air of unwillingness; and as he went, he pulled out his purse to be ready. As he took it out, a bright half-sovereign rolled on to the ground. Ruth was again passing them at the moment, and at once she picked it up, and following them into the shop, presented it, and said, "You dropped this, sir;" and making a

modest courtesy, was about to turn away again, when the old gentleman cried out,—

“Hey, what!—dropped a half-sovereign? Stop, my dear—here, you won’t be offended?—buy yourself a bonnet-ribbon;” and as he spoke he placed a crown-piece in her hand.

Ruth’s first impulse was to return it, but with the colour mounting to her brow, she remembered how welcome it would beat home, and with a little hesitation, said,—

“I am ashamed to take it, sir, but——”

“Nonsense!—what a fuss!—take it, and welcome, shan’t she, Ethel? It is a present from us on our birthday, Ethel, is it not? No, no, take it, my honest girl, and say no more;” and to stop her earnest thanks, he turned away.

How precious was that crown-piece to Ruth! It had saved her from the disgrace of the pawn-shop, it had saved her shawl; and before it was spent, she hoped to earn some more: and with a cheerful, thankful heart, she turned her steps towards home.

Her thoughts were busily occupied by the past and future, when she was startled by being run against by a person going very quickly, and passing her, as no Londoner would have done, on the wrong side. She looked up, and saw, to her surprise, her fellow-traveller, the good-natured Andrew. He recognized her at the same moment, and exclaimed, as he shook hands warmly, “Well, here’s luck! Lucy said to me, ‘Now, do make a minute to ask after Ruth Benson;’ and I said, ‘Lucy, it’s impossible, but if I can, I will;’ and here you are, thrown against me, I may say. She will be pleased, will Lucy. And how are you, now?”

Ruth was as much pleased as he was with the meeting, and she soon found that Andrew had been sent to town on business, which had already detained him two days in a remote part of the city, and that he had not had a moment's leisure since he came.

"In fact," as he said, "he ought to have been at the station by this time; but his father had bid him deliver a parcel himself to a cousin who lived in Oxford Street. He was going with it now, and it would throw him so late that he should have to set off by an evening train, travel great part of the night, and thus disturb Lucy by arriving very early in the morning; "if, indeed," as he added, "she is not sitting up expecting me, which is more likely, as I could not exactly tell her what train I should get home by. He has a baby-linen warehouse, has my cousin; he is very well to do," continued Andrew, with a little honest pride; "he employs I can't tell you how many sewing-girls, and pays them well, too. It is not our north-country men that grind the poor things down into white slaves."

Ruth hardly heard the last few words; an idea had seized her mind. Here was an opportunity. She would ask Andrew for a recommendation. This was not so easy, though. She felt very reluctant to mention the subject, and the words seemed to stick in her throat; but she said to herself, "Courage, this seems an occasion opened for you, do not lose it; think of the poor breadless children you have left at home;" and then, with a deep blush, she said to him, "I hope you will not think me very forward, but would you be so very kind as to recommend me to your cousin for some work?"

"For some work!" echoed Andrew; "you surely do

not need——” but he caught Ruth’s earnest, anxious look, and he added, kindly, “If you seriously wish to earn something in this way, I will gladly speak for you as far as I am able. You know,” he continued, smiling, “I am no judge of stitching, we should have had Lucy here for that; besides, I have never seen any of yours, I think. But I will do what I can. How shall we manage? Could you come along with me now?”

With many thanks, Ruth agreed to return with him, and they walked together for about a mile, until they reached the cousin’s warehouse. Andrew took Ruth into a sort of packing-place, where he found her a seat, and then he went to see his cousin in the counting-house.

It was not very long before he returned for Ruth, and introduced her to his cousin, Mr. Markham. As he sat at his high desk, Mr. Markham looked, as Andrew had said, well to do in the world; but his wrinkled forehead, and his keen searching eye, showed the continued thought and careful diligence that had been required to make him so. Neither hard work nor prosperity, however, had injured Mr. Markham’s heart, and it was in no unkindly manner that he began to question Ruth.

That her uncle was in temporary difficulties, and that she desired to earn something towards supporting the family until he should be set up in business again, were the reasons that she gave. As for her own means, of which Andrew had informed him, Ruth confessed that it would be some time before the next remittance became due, and that her uncle would not allow her to get any beforehand, and she, therefore, could give no security for the work that she might be allowed to take home; but she gave the name of her native village, Mr.

Turner's address, and that of her kind clergyman, Mr. Elmsley.

"Sick aunt, weak uncle, helpless children," said Mr. Markham, when he had finished his skilful questioning; "you seem a good girl, but you may be imposed upon; you are willing to work, and they make you work whilst they spend. Now if I, on my young cousin's responsibility, give you employment, you must promise to be prudent. It is no kindness to slave yourself to support others in idleness, and if I find this to be the case, I shall take it from you again. Is there any other friend who could be bound for you?"

Ruth's heart flew at once to the place where her dearest friend was working away for her, and she answered, with a blushing smile, "I have one, sir, but I should not like him to know about it."

"How is that?" asked Mr. Markham, sternly.

"I am engaged to be married to him, sir," said Ruth, simply, "and if he knew I was going to work this way, he would want me to get married directly, and I have promised not to leave them yet; and it would be bad for him, too, sir, till he is settled for himself."

"I see," said Mr. Markham, relaxing a little. "You shall have work, young woman;" and so the affair was settled; the other arrangements were quickly made, and Ruth went away quite happy, with a packet of fine work in her possession.

Andrew would see her to her uncle's door, and did not leave her until he had made her many offers of assistance; which she gratefully, but decidedly, refused.

It was to a scene of misery that Ruth returned. Her uncle's applications to his creditors had been unavailing,

except in one case, and everything in the shop, and most of the household furniture, would have to be sold, and in the mean time he knew not where to turn to find subsistence for himself and his family.

The kind gentleman's five shillings prevented any immediate need, but Ruth knew this would not last very long, and that no time must be lost in earning more. But there were several things to be attended to as well. First of all, she tried to keep the family to their usual habits, for she knew how much people are made happier by being regular. It helped her a good deal, to find that her aunt was so much consoled by the hopeful change in her husband, that she was little affected, comparatively speaking, by the troubles that had come upon the household. It was true, that the appearance of poverty was kept as much as possible from her sight. For some time, Ruth had been busy in transforming her old coloured gowns into nice dresses for the younger children, and for Jessy ; by her care also they were kept clean and neat, and pleasant to their mother's eye. Ruth had also to reconcile her aunt to the idea of her new employment ; this was more easy than she might have expected. She only begged Ruth not to work too hard, and then began to tell her about the pleasure that she had had in making her own first baby's clothes. Next, Ruth had to prepare Jessy for being her substitute in all the household duties. " I am going to throw a great deal upon you, Jessy, she said, but I know you will wish to help as much as ever you can in this dreadful time of your poor father's trouble." Here Jessy began to cry ; she had done little else but cry since she knew about it. " Don't fret, dear," continued Ruth ; " I think we shall be

able to manage very nicely. I have got a promise of constant work, if my sewing gives satisfaction, so I mean to spend every minute over it that I can, and there is no knowing how much I may be able to earn, if I improve in the finer kinds; then what I want you to do is, to take every part of the house-work, mind the children, and wait upon your mother; it will be hard for me to sit and see you do everything by yourself, but I shall be working in my way too."

"You know I can't do anything right," whimpered Jessy.

"My dear Jessy," said Ruth, "have a good heart, and do your best. Just let me grumble a little sometimes, and don't be vexed if I seem cross or particular, that is all I wish, and it would make me so happy." A sob was Jessy's only answer, and Ruth continued, "This is a time when we must all do our utmost, and deny ourselves in many ways. A long trial may be before us; but if we are industrious, and seek God's blessing, we may be sure that brighter days will come."

Jessy did not reply to Ruth's appeal, but Ruth, with thankfulness, saw her very soon dry her eyes, and set herself to put the house in order.

CHAPTER XIII.

“Be still, sad heart! and cease repining,
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.”
LONGFELLOW.

FROM this time Ruth scarcely ever left the little table that she had placed near the window for her sewing. If any of her cousins wanted her to do anything for them, she said, “Pray do not ask me; I have got a new trade for my fingers, and I must turn you over to Jessy, but my tongue and my ears are at your service.”

Her tongue and her ears often had to be of service. There was always something or other that Tom or her uncle had to talk to her about, when they were in the house, and the little boys and Rosa used to come and sit beside her, whilst she told them stories or heard them repeat their hymns and lessons. Jessy, too, had to be directed, but this was done in a way that made her feel that she was trusted. Recent events had had a good influence on her, and it was wonderful how the girl improved. Ruth watched the change with pleasure, whilst she plied her busy needle.

That needle seldom stopped till midnight, and at six the next morning it was plodding on again.

“I am young and strong,” said Ruth, to herself, if her back ached, or her eyes were weary. “The children must

not starve, and there seems little chance of Tom or my uncle earning anything just now."

Tom did not, however, resign himself easily to the idea of his earning nothing. It chafed him to see Ruth thus labouring, and made him resume his old moody manner; but on the second day he went out, and bid them not be uneasy, if he did not return till night. When he came back, he produced, with honest pride, a handful of coppers, which he had gained, as he confided to Ruth, by calling a cab, holding a gentleman's horse, and some other little jobs of the same sort. This restored him to his self-respect; but as he said, "It cannot last long, I must find something regular. If I can only be a shoe-black, I will try to keep myself from being a burden upon my poor father."

And so the days wore on, till Sunday came, a blessed day of rest for Ruth and all of them.

Much as John Martin shrank from being seen by his neighbours, he was now so completely aroused to a sense of the importance of the one thing needful, that he resolved in future to neglect none of the means of grace, and that Sunday morning saw him for the first time leading his blind boy to church. Thus, in the midst of difficulties, this Sunday was far from an unhappy one to this poor family.

With the Monday morning's light, they rose again to toil. Jessy to her housekeeping, Ruth to her sewing, Tom to his wanderings, and the father to renew his fruitless search after employment. He asked for work at the shoe establishments, for he knew the trade in all its branches, but no one would employ a bankrupt tradesman without recommendation; and wherever he applied,

the same objection stood against him, and he returned heartsick and weary. Next day came the sale, the crowd of impertinent people, and the noisy auctioneer. By the kindness of his principal creditor, John Martin was able, with a few exceptions, to keep his wife's room undisturbed; but every other room was partially dismantled, and when the wretched day closed, the strangers were at last shut out, and the dust and litter cleared away, the rooms looked sadly empty. Here and there a chair, an ornament or a book, was gone, that had been for years an old familiar friend; and the vacancy of the present, the uncertainty about the future, threw a sad gloom upon them all. But the next day Ruth had finished her work, and when Tom, with two little silver coins, returned at the close of the afternoon, she asked him to walk with her to the warehouse. The walk was refreshing to her, and it was pleasant to find that her work gave satisfaction. She was paid the amount that had been agreed upon, and furnished with another bundle; but instead of going away, she asked the clerk who paid her, if she might speak with Mr. Markham.

The man seemed surprised, and demurred a little, but Ruth's earnestness prevailed; the man went to inquire, and soon returned to conduct her to the private counting-house, where his master was in the act of locking-up his desk before leaving town for the night. It was in the hope of finding some work for Tom that Ruth had ventured to take this step; but she was now rather frightened at her own temerity, and, as she explained to Mr. Markham, begged him to excuse her boldness.

"But he is so very anxious to be doing something, poor fellow. He would sweep a crossing, I believe, if he had



the means to buy a broom; and it seems such a shame, when he can write a good hand and keep accounts, and is thoughtful and steady beyond his age."

"So, because I have employed you," said the plain-spoken and rather stern Mr. Markham, "I am next to place all your needy relatives. I suppose that I shall have to find a pleasant situation for the father, and then keep all the little ones. You had better get married, young woman, and mind your own affairs."

"I am afraid I have been very troublesome, sir," said Ruth, "but your kindness to myself emboldened me. I shall always be grateful for that;" and she made a courtesy, and turned away.

"Stop, stop!" cried Mr. Markham, gruffly. "How old is this youth, who wants a broom?"

"Nearly sixteen, I believe, sir," answered Ruth.

"Humph. Should have been apprenticed to some honest business before now. Kept his father's books, you say? No great proof of his ability, to look at the result. Minded the shop!—not much practice there, I fancy. You see, young woman, when I can get respectable, well-connected youths, to fill my warehouses, I need not go into the streets to find them. It is true, that Wiggins has just been such an ass as to set up for himself, and that makes a move up, and the youngest stool is vacant, but——" And here Mr. Markham, to assist his deliberations, slowly began to take a pinch of snuff; whilst Ruth's heart began to beat so anxiously, that she had to remind herself that all would be ordered better than she could desire, and to bid herself be calm.

"Where is this youth?" asked Mr. Markham, after a few minutes' silence.

"At the door, sir," answered Ruth. "He knows nothing of my application. He only came to take care of me."

Mr. Markham put on his hat and gloves, and took his heavy cane, and motioned Ruth to follow him. At the door, as Ruth had said, was Tom, standing with his hands in his pockets, looking listlessly up and down, in his most moody way. He was tall for his age, and had outgrown his clothes, but they were well brushed and clean. His old cap was pulled down over his eyebrows, and his shoulders were stuck up defiantly.

"Tom!" said Ruth, for he did not hear them coming.

The lad started, and as he turned round to join her, a smile gave brightness to his face.

"Tom, this is Mr. Markham, who has had the goodness to employ me."

"She is very grateful to you, sir," said Tom, plucking up his best manner; "and so we ought to be, too, if we didn't see her stitching her health away for us."

"Why do you let her stitch for you, then?" said Mr. Markham. "You are a strong, able-bodied youth; why don't you work yourself?"

"I am going to work, sir," said Tom, with dignity.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Markham; "and pray what are you going to do?"

"It is not easy to find, sir; but others have made their way, and I will make mine," said Tom.

"You are confident, young man," said Mr. Markham.

"I don't mean to boast, sir," said Tom, more modestly, "but my father is in trouble, and I must not be a burden on him."

"Well let me hear what you are fit for?" said the old gentleman, relaxing.

"I can read and write, sir, and keep accounts, but there is small chance of my doing anything in that line as yet; but I have two strong arms, sir [here Tom pulled himself up], and I must use them in getting my own livelihood in the best way I can." And thus saying, Tom relieved Ruth of her large parcel.

"Humph!" said Mr. Markham; "a pair of strong arms is not a bad thing, provided they are willing ones and not conceited. I suppose that you could sweep a front and scrub a floor, then?"

"Thanks to my cousin here, I think I could, sir. She has taught me that, and a good many more things."

"Well," said Mr. Markham, "I do not like to see a willing lad starving for want of work, so come to me at eight o'clock to-morrow morning, and I will see what I can do. I cannot talk to you any longer now, for here is my omnibus coming. Good night."

This was a pleasant prospect to take home. It threw new life and hope into them all, and Tom saw himself the supporter of his family.

His visions for the future were very grand; yet he was not disappointed when, on his punctual arrival at the warehouse the next morning, he was only set to sweep out the offices and to clean the windows. He was afterwards made to write and cast up some columns, and, in fact, he was tried in every capacity, and was kept running hither and thither continually. But at the end of the day he was amply repaid by Mr. Markham's telling him that he should be employed for a month, and if at the

end of that time his conduct should have been quite satisfactory, he should be engaged for a longer period. For his services at present he was to receive board and lodging,—no mean object, in the destitute condition of his family,—and afterwards, in addition, a small weekly payment, with the promise of increase when deserved.

His father and mother were very glad of this hopeful opening for their eldest son, and they had now learned to heighten the value of all earthly blessings by raising their hearts in thankfulness to Him who gave them.

It may be wondered at that they should remain in their present large house and burdened with the empty shop, but the reason was, that the rent being paid beforehand, they had still a right to remain in it some months, and before the end of that time John Martin hoped to have found some settled business again. He had at last met with some employment, such as it was. A large tradesman, who was very busy and in want of hands, had given him temporary work, and though this was humbling to a man who had so long been himself a master, he was thankful to have the prospect of bringing home a few shillings every Saturday night for some weeks to come.

The good doctor still came to see Mrs. Martin, and prescribed for her, but would take no fee. The medicine, however, was expensive, and it seemed impossible to procure it for her. She sank so much without its strengthening aid, however, that Ruth resolved to spare no pains to procure it, and, by dint of the most untiring industry, she contrived to earn the extra money it required.

And now the time had come round again when she must write to William. She had in the mean time re-

ceived a cheerful letter from him, which was a great treasure to her. It spoke of his future prospects with the greatest hopefulness, and planned the future for her with such a happy pen, that Ruth's needle flew with unconscious swiftness when she thought about these things, as if her working hard could bring her sooner to that time. And this letter had to be replied to, and with difficulty she could spare time for the purpose. By getting up a little sooner, however, she did write it, and, uneasy in her mind at concealing all from William, she told him at last that her uncle was in bad circumstances just now, and that she had therefore to be very careful of both time and money, which prevented her from writing a long letter; but she added:—"Was it not well, dear William, that I agreed to remain another year? for how could I have left them in their time of need? I only tell you this because of my promise to you; but you need not be afraid that I am in great trouble, for we are all very happy together. Aunt, in her kind, sweet way, has just said that I am a comfort to them; and although I know it is partly her affection for me that makes her say so, yet it makes me very happy."

From this cheerful account William could form no idea of the scanty meals and the incessant toil that the brave-hearted girl was going through, and when he wrote again it was to encourage her in the path of duty, and to point again to the peaceful home where she should come and be a comfort to him who loved her best of all.

During this time, Jessy too was plodding on, moping sometimes, and often cross, but relieved by not having Tom to tease her, and mock her clumsy efforts, and

bearing better than might have been expected Ruth's frequent orders and instruction. There was now a wish to do better, which was hopeful. Her mother saw it, and was glad to be waited upon by her daughter with a comparative neatness and handiness which Jessy had never shown before. She was a little kinder to the children, too; sometimes she did slap Rosa still, but she attended to her better; and one day she had stood in the window for some time, watching Ruth's rapid progress in the stitching of a child's pretty dress, when she said, "Couldn't I help?—not in that fine work, I don't mean, but something coarser?"

Ruth was glad that Jessy added that, for her sewing was scarcely fit for a kitchen-towel, much less for the delicate workmanship of the fine work that she was almost afraid to let Jessy take up in her fingers; but she answered,—

"Well, Jessy, I think you are helping a good deal. I don't know what they would do without you; but if you could do some sewing too, it would be an excellent thing, and I will try to get some stronger kinds of work for you."

Ruth managed this without much trouble. She had already become a favourite at the warehouse, from her neatness and punctuality, and the next time she procured an extra and a different supply. So Jessy sat with her at the little table of an afternoon, and though she often left it on some frivolous excuse, and sometimes stopped to cry because she was tired, or her fingers ached, yet she felt that she was really working for the family, and the consciousness gave her honest pleasure. And thus the long summer days had passed

away, and the dreary winter nights were coming, which threatened to bring a sad increase of expense in the long necessity for candle-light.

But Tom's ordeal was now over. His rough manners and unsociable temper had prevented his making many friends among the young men employed in the warehouse, but his steady purpose and his good abilities had pleased Mr. Markham, and he was engaged at a rather larger salary than had been at first mentioned.

There was not much roughness in Tom's manner when he took his first regular earnings home, the Sunday afterwards. It was true they had no meat for dinner, and the smallest of fires, although the day was chilly; but they were not miserable, for the mother was a little stronger, and they each had the pleasant consciousness that they were striving to do their duty in the line that had been opened for them. But alas! their troubles were not yet at an end. A further trial was in store for them.

One evening, when the father had returned from his daily labour, he went to get some wood from the closet where it was kept, to make the fire burn quicker, that his wife might have some tea; and finding that the small supply was exhausted, with a half sigh, he took down his walking-stick, and began to break it up. He was using some force to break it when the stick snapped suddenly, his foot slipped on the smooth hearthstone, and he fell down and sprained his ankle in such a severe manner that he nearly fainted with the pain. They were all very much frightened, but Ruth and Jessy applied cold water and vinegar; and then, after preparing his wife for seeing him in such a plight, helped him to his room, in the hope

that a long night's rest might allay the pain. But it was little rest he got; and in the morning there was so much swelling and inflammation that Ruth went to the nearest chemist's, and by his advice brought back some leeches. When Jessy saw the black creatures she screamed and ran out of the room, but Ruth managed, with a little help from the patient wondering Davy, to apply them herself. Her uncle obtained some relief from them, but the pain and weakness were still so great that it was plain it might be weeks before he would be fit to walk; and this sad reflection increased the fever that was already on him.

"I think," said he, as he lay on an old wooden couch, that they had lifted for him into his wife's room, "I think if I could only get my work, I could do a little at home. It would kill me to lie here idle long."

And this idea was so fixed in his mind that Ruth put her bonnet on and went to the place where he had worked, to see if they would let him have some binding or light work to do at home. What was her grief to find that they had already supplied his place, and would not listen to her tale! It was sorrowful news to bring back with her; but if anything could have sweetened it, Ruth's quiet, cheerful manner might have done so. Her eye was no longer bright, and her cheek was becoming pale and thin, but she was still pleasant to look upon, and the calm look that told of a mind at peace had not yet left her.

"It is perhaps as well, uncle," she then added; "for you would most likely have thrown yourself back with trying to do more than you have strength for. Now you can lie here and amuse aunt, and try to get well as soon as possible."

John Martin groaned, and hid his face in his hands ; and the tears rolled down his wife's cheeks in sympathy. Ruth was obliged to leave them thus, but as she began to stitch, she called Davy to her, and said, "Davy, dear, your father is very sorrowful at this trial that God has been pleased to send him, and mother is grieved to see him suffer. You must go and try to comfort them." And Davy went to them. At first he only sat quietly beside his father's couch ; but soon he asked if he might say a hymn and then another, and then at last he told them his verses about heaven ; and as they listened to the simple piety of their beloved child, his parents' hearts were raised in prayer for patience, and they were comforted.

But soon the time came, when they could scarcely amongst them raise even the money that was needed for their slender meals, and Ruth felt that she must now apply to her own funds, at least for a small sum. But first she went to the little heap of her own possessions, which were piled up in a corner of the bedroom, and covered over because the press was sold ; and she turned them over to see which article, endeared as they all now seemed to her by long association, she might the most easily sell or pawn for bread. From amongst them she selected the old woollen shawl that had once before been taken out for the same purpose, and carrying it herself to the most respectable-looking pawnbroker's she could find, she obtained enough on it to relieve their present wants.

But she had another anxiety which was quite her own ; she had not heard from William for three weeks, and she could not help fearing that some ill had happened to

him. She would have written to ask his mother, but it might have seemed like complaining, if illness were not the cause ; besides that she really had not time. That his affection for her had changed she never thought, but her busy fancy, weakened as her spirits were by want and toil, presented many sad reasons to her mind for this long silence.

Her uncle was now improving fast. The doctor when he called had seen his ankle, and said that it was going on well, but that he must not use it too soon or he might be laid up again. By Ruth's exertions he had got a little work to do at home : what he earned did not make up for Ruth's lost time in seeking it ; but she was satisfied, because it rendered his confinement less tedious, and prevented him from feeling himself a useless burden on the girls.

Another week was passing, and no letter yet. Ruth's cheek grew paler, and her fingers were so weary they could scarcely guide the needle ; and as she crawled to bed at midnight, her strength seemed scarcely able to take her there.

She tried to say to herself, " It is but a stormy day, if I could see it properly. I know the bow of mercy is still shining through the drops of rain, and I will wait till it is over." But the storm seemed very long and dark to her sometimes.

CHAPTER XIV.

“Trust His rich promises of grace,
So shall they be fulfilled in thee;
God never yet forsook at need
The soul that trusted Him indeed.”

NEWMARCK.

ONE afternoon Ruth was thinking thus, as she tried to stitch a band of cambric, when Davy came and sat as usual at her feet. But for a long time he did not speak. At last he said, “Ruth, will you tell me once more about heaven? It all seems so dark here now, and your voice is getting so sad, that I forget.”

It was the beautiful account in Revelations that he wanted, Ruth well knew, and with faltering tones, but unfailing memory, she said it to him. And then he was content, and laid his head against Ruth's knee, and did not speak again. Ruth, also, was silent, but the tears were falling fast, though gently, on her work. “I see it now,” she said to herself. “I, too, might have said with Davy, ‘I forget.’ The cares of this world have overcome me. I have been faint. I have not leaned all my burden on Him who died to bear it. I have not remembered enough the rest that remaineth for His people.”

And clasping Davy's little hand, Ruth knelt down in penitence and prayed with earnestness. She rose up comforted, but it was not to take her work again. She

tried, but could not see, although her tears were gone. Her mind was easy now, but her body had sunk under the pressure of anxiety, fatigue, and scanty fare, and Ruth was very ill.

This seemed to be the climax of their misery. It was a bitter moment for them all, when, after Jessy, in the greatest fright, had helped Ruth to bed, and when Ted had fetched the doctor, he said their cousin was in a low fever, and would need great care. If she was not much better in a day or two, they must have a nurse, he added; and in the meantime he gave Jessy minute cautions and directions, and putting five shillings into her hand, bid her see that the good girl wanted for nothing: he would pay for all that he had ordered.

Jessy's grief was violent; between her teeth she muttered, "I have killed her, I have killed her;" but this was only at first: in a short time, a new energy seemed to have sprung up in her, and with a devotion that she had not seemed capable of, and a skill that was wonderful, considering her native clumsiness, she began to nurse her poor sick cousin. It was not more than eight and forty hours after this, that a cab stopped before John Martin's door. Telling the cabman he need not knock, a young man first appeared, and then helped out a comely country dame, with a kind face and a pleasant wholesome countenance. A basket and bundle followed, then the cab was paid for and sent away. "The shop is closed, mother," said the young man. "They surely can't be moved; if they are, that partly accounts for it."

"Knock at the door with your knuckles," said a saucy urchin, who was playing at marbles near the door-step.

“Does John Martin live here now?” asked the young man, anxiously.

“He ain’t gone away, that I knows on,” replied the marble-playing youth. “He’s failed. That’s why the shop’s shut up.”

While he spoke, the young man had knocked without effect, and now he knocked again.

The door was at last opened cautiously, as it seemed, and a child of five or six appeared in a dirty pinafore, with face and hair to match.

“This is one of them, I think,” said the young man, “Are you not Edward Martin?” he asked the child.

“I’m Ted,” said the little boy, with a wondering look.

“That is right. For whom shall I ask, mother? Is your father in?”

“Yes,” said the child.

But this slow questioning did not suit the active countrywoman. By this time, she had passed the child, and was making her way across the darkened shop. The side door was opened and she went through it, and up the narrow staircase, then gave a little sharp knock at the first door she came to, which was ajar.

No one came, but there was the sound of a child crying, so she pushed open the door, and beheld a scene of greater wretchedness than had met Ruth’s eye when she first came to her London home. There was no carpet, and scarcely any furniture in the room, not even the few shabby books and pictures that had once helped to make it look habitable. No fire in the grate, but on the rickety old table stood the tea-kettle, a dirty mug and a medicine bottle. On the hearth before where the fire should have been, sat a boy of eight or nine years old, with placid

countenance and long fair hair. He was trying to hush the sobs of a little girl, who seemed to have hurt herself against the fender, for her arm was scratched and bleeding. "Poor little lamb," said the good woman, hastening up to them, and taking Rosa in her arms, "it is a mercy there was no fire, or she might have been burnt to death. And where is your cousin Ruth, my dear, and where are your father and your mother?" That mother was in bed, that father had hurt his leg and could not walk, and that Ruth was very, very ill, was soon told with a mournful accent by the little boy; and William Turner, for it was indeed he, came in time to hear the conclusion of the story.

Mrs. Turner looked round her, and she saw a tale of poverty and desolation, which needed not the child's words to bring the tears in her eyes; but William was too impatient to let her pause, and he asked Davy to tell his mother that a friend of Ruth's, Mrs. Turner, had come to see her. As Davy crept away on this errand, feeling by the table and the wall in his usual manner, Mrs. Turner perceived that this was the blind boy that William had told her of, and her tears now overflowed with sympathy.

But as Davy reached the door, he was stopped by the entrance of a pale overgrown girl, dressed in an untidy, dirty gown, which Mrs. Turner knew at once had been one of Ruth's pretty lilac cottons. The girl's light hair was meant to be put up in a new fashion, but it was unbrushed, and tumbling down in heavy masses. Her eyes were swelled with crying, and she spoke in a deep low tone, almost a whisper, as she came up to Mrs. Turner.

"I know who you are," were the first words. "She has been talking about you just a bit since."

"Is she very ill, my dear?" asked Mrs. Turner, half frightened at her manner.

Jessy shook her head.

"You may do what you like to me," she said. "It's all one. I can't tell her about it now, she wouldn't understand me. But I can tell you," she added, raising her voice, and speaking passionately. "I lost the letter. She had eaten nothing all the day, to buy the stamp to free it with; and I was taking it to the post, and I lost it down a grate, and I never told her, not when I saw her getting whiter and whiter, and thinner and thinner, and her slaving herself and starving herself to death for us. You may do what you like to me, it's all one now," and Jessy's voice was choked with sobs.

"Poor things, poor things," said Mrs. Turner, with the tears streaming down her own cheeks, "ye all seem to have been so wretched that one can scarcely wonder at anything. Nay, William, honey, let her be; she has confessed freely now, poor thing, and she's sorely punished, if our poor Ruth be as bad as she thinks."

And William, who had seized Jessy's arm, with a violent grasp, and was going to question her more closely, let it fall at his mother's bidding, and made way for her to go upstairs, where she was telling Jessy to take her.

She had not come too soon. Ruth was in a sad state of fever, and her mind quite wandering, whilst the state of discomfort round her was most distressing. Mrs. Turner did not stay long beside her, she hastened down again to introduce herself to Ruth's aunt and uncle.

Davy had already told them she had come, and her sympathy and active kindliness soon made her seem like an old friend to them. The state of anxiety that they had been in about Ruth had been most painful, longing to be near her, and yet neither of them able to stir. Mr. Martin, indeed, had, with an immense effort, crawled upstairs; but Ruth's distress at seeing him, and the great pain that he felt afterwards, had compelled him to lie in the most fretting inactivity. So when Mrs. Turner asked if she might stay a while and nurse her poor young friend, the proposal was received with gratitude, and a load taken off their minds.

It was not many minutes after this, before the good woman had taken off her bonnet and large shawl and established herself in the house. William's suspense and alarm were relieved by his being sent out to buy lemons, vinegar, and barley, as well as more substantial articles of food. The children were amused by the promise of many good things; whilst to Jessy, Mrs. Turner spoke with the authority, and yet with the kindness of a mother.

"Now, Jessy," she said, "you seem to be grieved at the mischief that you have, no doubt, partly caused, though it seems to me that want and work have chiefly brought her to the state she is in; for Ruth Benson was not the girl to lie down and die because she had not heard for a few weeks from even her best loved friend; but that you have been wicked enough is clear, and if you are sorry for it, show it, as you ought to do, not by crying in that helpless way, but in first saying your prayers that God may forgive you, and then by trying, with His help, to stir yourself and use your head and hands to some

good purpose. I can see in two minutes that you have not been doing this ; you are young enough, however, to make a change, and I will show you how to do it, if you have a mind in real earnest to set about your duty."

Jessy had a mind to do her duty, and Mrs. Turner's scolding gave her the fillip she required. Since the evil moment when she yielded to the temptation of not telling Ruth that she had lost the letter, she had been a prey to remorse. Before that time, a change for the better had been working in her ; from envying she had begun to admire Ruth, and to wish to imitate her in some of her holy ways ; but after she had injured Ruth, she almost hated her ; and it was not until she saw her cousin laid helplessly before her that the tide of feeling turned. Now she was deeply humbled, ready to submit to any punishment ; and, what was more, to receive any good advice. In a few days she showed what might be done by even the most awkward girl, who resolutely sets forward in the path of duty. Sad and sober she remained ; it would not have been hopeful had it not been so ; but there was now an earnestness about her smallest action, which showed that a good work was indeed begun in her.

During this time Ruth had been in much danger, and William could not bear to leave London, but took lodgings near to them. He was constantly going backwards and forwards, only happy in being of use, as indeed he often was, in procuring comforts and necessaries for the sick-room or the family ; or, as Ruth improved and his anxiety allowed him, in trying to hear of a situation for the father. In this he at last succeeded, by the help of a friend, in the town where he had served his time. This friend had a brother in a large way of business at the

West-end, who now wanted a foreman, to whom he offered a better salary than Martin had for some years cleared by his own business. William made the greatest exertions to obtain this place for him, by writing for testimonials for him from his native village, where he had been much respected, and by going himself to his friend's brother and laying every circumstance of the case before him, not concealing Martin's weakness which had led him so far astray, but showing him also the earnestness with which he desired to start afresh in the world; and the master, who was a good and charitable man, agreed to try him for a short time at least. And the day on which the thankful father heard this news, was the one on which they also had the happiness of knowing that she who in their deepest distress had been the cheerful helper, the untiring support, was out of danger and likely to improve fast.

Now William felt that he could stay no longer; but before he went, by the doctor's leave, he saw her. The interview, although they both were cautioned to be quiet, was a trying one, to William at least. As for Ruth, you might have thought that she scarcely belonged to earth, so fair and pure she looked as she lay on the couch, provided for her in the kitchen by Mrs. Turner's care.

"I am grieved," she whispered, just before they said "good bye," "that you should have had to leave your work so long on my account; but it has been very nice to know that you were near. And then your mother,—oh! how kind she has been. I hope I never shall forget it. But I want you, dear William, not to murmur at any of the little troubles we may have had, or at my illness, but help me to be thankful for all. My illness

only came in time to remind me that I was making my home on earth, even amongst its cares and troubles, and forgetting to look forward to the one that, I trust, dear William, we both hope for in heaven."

And William went away with the desire to make himself more worthy of one whose love he felt was only the more precious, because her best affections were already fixed above.

As for Jessy, she showed her sincerity by submitting quietly to be shut out of the sick room until Ruth was well enough to leave it; and when she did see her, instead of flying into passionate exclamation, she controlled herself to speak quietly and humbly, and ask Ruth's forgiveness. This was given with the old cheerful smile, and Ruth added, as she kissed her,—

"I am amply repaid, dear Jessy, for any little suffering that you may have caused me, by the fruits that have sprung from your sorrow. May God's blessing rest upon your efforts!"

When Ruth was well enough to get up at her usual time, and had been out a little, Mrs. Turner packed up her bundle and went away. She would fain have taken Ruth with her, but Ruth said that she should do very well now, she would often take the children to the Park, and she should soon get strong; but she could not leave her aunt.

Poor Mrs. Martin, sorrow and anxiety had begun to tell sadly upon her weak frame; she suffered much at times, and required constant care. Between her and good Mrs. Turner a real friendship had sprung up, and looking forward to the probability of an early death, she had commended her children to Mrs. Turner's care. The

latter, although she did not think Mrs. Martin's danger was so great or so near as she feared, yet eased the mother's mind by promising never to lose sight of them; and as she could not have Ruth with her, she prevailed upon her parents to part with Rosa for a time, and carried the little girl away with her, to be freshened up by country air.

We will leave them now. Mrs. Martin on a weary bed of pain and sickness it is true, but with a mind at ease, and full of patient meekness. Her husband, now restored to his former strength, and taught by bitter experience, was steadily working his way into the good will of his employers, and preparing himself, by industry and saving, for taking again, at some future period, the cares of a master on himself—Tom, plodding on at Mr. Markham's with his old pertinacity, but with a higher and a happier aim than when he used to pore over a penny magazine in the old shop—Ted at a day-school doing well,—and the two cousins, Ruth and Jessy, now working hand-in-hand—Ruth guiding, Jessy following—Ruth directing cheerfully, Jessy obeying gratefully.

We will leave them thus, and passing over the lapse of perhaps ten months, we will return to the pretty village of Haverleigh, and in the bright sunshine of a September evening we will walk through the flowery lane that overlooks the village, and come near to the whitewashed cottage on the hill. We will not stay now to admire the prospect, far and near, the open, fertile country, bounded by the deep blue hills, the church, the parsonage, the thriving little town itself. We saw it once before; but it was spring time then, now it is autumn—ripe, fruitful autumn. We have reached the cottage, as it stands

beneath the shelter of the old beech-trees. The door is open; if we might peep in, we should see a picture of neatness and thriving comfort, but we can partly gather that from the outside,—the bright and glistening windows, each with its snowy curtain, except the lower ones, which are only shaded by some scarlet geraniums and tall balsams in full bloom; and from the garden through which the well-gravelled path leads from the little gate. You first perceive the useful part; the potatoes almost ready to be stored, the beds where other vegetables are to be, the berry-trees and currants on the wall up as far as where the little orchard stands upon the hill opposite to the beeches; but passing these, you see the hand of taste as well as usefulness has not been wanted in the piece of smooth green turf laid down before the door and windows, with little beds cut out upon it, now bright and sweet, with pinks, and stocks, and mignonette.

Near to where the beech-trees stand, a little farther on, and shaded by their branches, is an arbour put up and ornamented by a skilful hand; and in this arbour sat Ruth Turner, with her faithful husband by her side. They had been talking earnestly, and Ruth's eyes were moist, but there was no trace of care upon her comely and contented face. She had a letter in her hand, which she had kept to read with William when he came home at night. It was Jessy's account of the household in London, from which cousin Ruth had now been missing several weeks. There was much pleasant news in it. The mother, who had been improving for some time, was now able to be wheeled in a chair from one room to another, "and can see that I do things right," as Jessy said. It told, too, of Tom's advancement to a higher

salary, and of her father's contentment in his present situation; and a few words at the end, added in a trembling hand by the mother herself, said how nicely Jessy was going on, and sent good wishes to the new home.

"We must have Jessy down to stay with us some day, if it can be managed," said William, when they had read the letter through; "she would enjoy the change."

"Yes," said Ruth, "it would indeed be nice, but it is Davy's turn first, you know: dear Davy! Fancy him among the flowers here, that loved a dirty London leaf, or a house-sparrow; just fancy him running in the fields, or watching the milking of your mother's cows, or what he would like better still, going with us to our dear old church, where the fresh country air comes like a breath of heaven, and the children's voices sound so sweet."

"And I have been thinking," said William, after a short pause, "that as Ted, you say, showed such a turn for carving and joinering, though his tools were only an old knife and the kitchen poker, that perhaps I might take him as an apprentice, and teach him cabinet-making. But that is looking a long way forward, and I feel more inclined just now to look back, and recollect our many blessings, everything turned to good, however trying things might seem at first. All that want and misery last year; out of which arose Tom's being placed in such a good way of business, and your uncle saved from his unsteady ways, and Jessy—oh, Ruth! to think of Jessy's wickedness—so bitterly repented of, poor girl!—being the means of my rushing off to my mother, certain that something was sadly wrong, and persuading her to come all the way to London to help you. We little

thought, though, how much you really needed help. And then at last came my hearing of this good business in our native place, and my being thus able to bring you back to live in your old home, in comfort, and I trust in happiness, my Ruth."

"God has indeed been very good to us," she answered; "and as I asked you once before, my husband, I now ask you again to help me never to forget His goodness, and to remember, that whether we are travelling through the clouds or in the sunshine, we should always have our faces turned towards that heavenly home, where He can and will for Jesus' sake, as Davy used to love to say—

"Heal every wound, hush every fear,
From every eye wipe every tear;
And place them where distress is o'er,
And pleasure dwells for evermore."

Rachel Dunn;
OR,
THE ONLY DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

“And Kindness is the gentler sister’s name.”—COLERIDGE.

“Who growest not alone in power
And knowledge, but from hour to hour
In rev’rence, and in charity.”—IN MEMORIAM.

“It’s true as fate, Mrs. Dunn,” said Betsy Miller, “you may ask mother if it isn’t. And everybody knows that Jacky Taylor took many a measureful of Mrs. Hunton’s oats, till he got turned off the farm; so it’s not much wonder if Jane should follow in the same track.”

“Well, Betsy,” said the other, “there may be truth in what you have told me about Jane Taylor. She may have lost her place through dishonesty, but we all know what false reports often get about; and all I mean to say is, that it does not become a young girl like you to be spreading them. You will excuse an old friend for speaking so freely to you, Betsy.”

“Of course,” said Betsy, though plainly much offended; “but I haven’t made it up; it’s just as Nanny Briggs told me.”

“But you are not sure that Nanny Briggs has heard

a true account, and it is not safe on hearsay from a deaf old woman to repeat things that might ruin Jane Taylor's character. Poor Jane! I know she used to feel her father's disgrace most keenly; and at home and at school it seemed to be her constant care to keep a good name, and make people forget that there had ever been a reproach thrown at it. This makes me think it is not likely that in her first place she would yield to the temptation of stealing a piece of lace. She never was fond of finery, but modest in all her ways; and I have heard her mother say that Jane had never given her an hour's care. No, Betsy, I think it can't be true. At any rate, please don't speak of it again till we hear more about it. It is best to be on the side of kindness. Do as you would be done by, and be kind to your old schoolfellow's name behind her back, Betsy. You wouldn't wish to do her harm, that I'm sure of."

"Well, I must be off. I didn't mean to stop, only I thought that you would like to hear the news. Good morning;" and Betsy, still looking very cross, moved down the village, and Mrs. Dunn went back into her pretty cottage.

She was there attending to her household matters, when she heard a merry little voice behind her, saying,—

"Mother, I'm top again!"

"That's right, Rachel," said her mother, turning round to kiss the speaker.

This was a bright-faced little girl about ten years old, with dark eyes and a sweet mouth, and hair that would not brush straight behind her ears, without stopping to wave up and down upon the way.

"But, mother," continued Rachel, as she went to

hang up her bag of books, "Ellen Smith was so disappointed that she cried, because she's been top so long before this week. I'm afraid she won't like to play with me so well now. I'd rather not have been top, than have vexed Ellen."

"Well, my dear," said her mother, "it is right of you to be glad when you are top, because you feel that you have been doing your best, as you ought to do; and it is right to be sorry for vexing Ellen. You must be very kind to her, and then she will forget that you have vexed her. And most likely she will soon get top again, if you go on trying ever so much, for she is older and cleverer than you, little Rachel. But now I have got a piece of news for you. What do you think father has heard this morning?"

"That our melon has got the prize," guessed Rachel.

"No; try again," said her mother.

"That old Tommy has got into the hospital. Oh, mother, has he?"

"No, Rachel; you're quite out this morning."

"Well, mother, I can't guess," said Rachel, laughing at her own perplexity. "Is it about the war?"

"No, it is quite home news," answered her mother. "Your father has had a letter from Mr. Sinclair, to say that he and Miss Emmeline are coming home next week."

"Oh, mother!" was all that Rachel could say in reply to a piece of news like this.

"So you may fancy how busy your father is, and will be, getting the houses put in order, forcing blooms for the conservatory, mowing all the grass, and rolling all the walks. He has had to get many extra hands; and

I am going up to the Hall this afternoon to see if I can help Mrs. Fothergill, for I am sure she must be at her wits' end, with this coming on her so suddenly."

"Will all the brown covers be taken off, mother?" asked Rachel, "and the beautiful sky-blue curtains put up, that I saw one day in the presses in Mrs. Fothergill's room?"

"Yes, my dear," said her mother; "and father is very pleased. He says things will be as they should be now. He had almost given up hoping to see the family at the Hall again, and Mrs. Fothergill thought the same."

"What has made them be coming now, mother?" asked Rachel.

"Miss Sinclair wants to come, her papa says; and it has been recommended for her health too," replied her mother.

Rachel wondered that the wishes of a little girl should make such a change, and she said, "How old is Miss Sinclair, mother?"

"Just a year and three months older than you are," was the reply. "We are none of us likely to forget her age; for the day that gave a daughter to the Hall, took her sweet mother away. From that moment Mr. Sinclair took quite a dislike to the place, and has lived in Scotland ever since."

"And will he be sorry to come now, mother?"

"Not if it pleases his little daughter, Rachel; she is all that is left to him now. The living will have filled up the place left by the dead. But look here, Rachel," continued Mrs. Dunn, opening the oven-door, "I was making a good rice-pudding for our dinner, and I thought I would take a little of it for Nanny Briggs. It is just

enough now; so run and fetch your basket, and you may carry it to her."

Nothing pleased Rachel better than such an errand, and she held her basket willingly, whilst her mother first spread a clean brown towel, and then put the pudding in it, folding the ends over to keep it warm, and bidding Rachel take great care not to shake it about as she went.

When the little girl came back again, her face was so full of concern, that you might have thought that she had stumbled, and dropped the basket and the pudding; but it was not that.

"Mother," she said, "Nanny says that Jane Taylor is a thief."

"Do not listen to such tales, Rachel dear," replied her mother. "We know how good and honest Jane used to be, and we may hope she is not changed."

"But Nanny says that Jane took some lace that belonged to her mistress, and that she has been turned away."

"Nanny makes mistakes sometimes, my dear, from being deaf; and I expect that she has not got hold of the right story this time. At any rate, mind, Rachel, that you do not tell it again. Never repeat a story to the harm of any one. That would not be kind, you know."

"No, mother," said Rachel, much relieved to find that her mother did not believe that Jane Taylor was a thief; and her mother continued:—

"Now, put your bonnet off and spread the table-cloth. Father will be coming in to dinner soon, and I am sure he will be in haste for it to-day. In the afternoon you may dress yourself, and I will take you with me up to

the Hall. There will very likely be something for you to do at such a busy time."

With this prospect before her, Rachel went about her work with glee, and as she ate her dinner, and helped her mother to clear away afterwards, the opening of those treasure-laden presses in the housekeeper's room was dancing before her eyes. To see the drawing-room set out in all its splendour, as she had heard her mother, who had been a housemaid there, describe it, would be such a pleasure as she had scarcely dared to hope for; and perhaps the best set of china would be taken out to-day, and those beautiful dessert-plates, that had a different flower on each plate. Her mother had once called Rachel her handy, careful girl; suppose she should be allowed to dust these plates. There was no end to the bright dreams of Rachel, as she put their own plain white crockery away.

Then her mother told her to go and put on her afternoon frock and a clean pinafore; and she soon came down again, as neat and nice as she could make herself, ready to set off with her mother to the Hall.

But as Rachel came tripping into the kitchen by the staircase-door, another person entered by the other door. This was a neighbour, Mary Simmons, a pale, careworn woman, who held a baby in her arms, and had another child, who but just could walk, clinging to her skirts. She seemed in a hurry and spoke anxiously.

"Oh! Mrs. Dunn," she said, "you are not going out, are you? I wanted to see if you would be as good as let your Rachel mind the poor children for me this afternoon, as it is a holiday. There's a covered waggon just come to the Boston Arms; it is on its way to Leverton,

where our John is, and Walton has got the man to say that he will give me a lift as far as the town-end, and I could walk back again. I shouldn't be later nor five or six o'clock in getting back again. Can she come?"

"It is a pity!" said Mrs. Dunn, with one glance at Rachel's suddenly clouded face; "she should have come with pleasure, but I have promised to take her up with me to the Hall, where they're busy preparing for the family. Have you heard how John is?"

"Oh! he's awful bad; gets no sleep, poor lad, and frets so to see me, they say;" and the poor woman wiped her eyes.

"Mother, please," said Rachel, swallowing down at one gulp all her disappointment, "I'd rather go to Mary's, if I may."

"To be sure, honey," said her mother; "that is right. I only thought you would be so put about if I broke my promise to you. Mary, Rachel will come and mind the children. She can go with you now, and hold the baby while you put on your things."

All Rachel's visions of the sky-blue curtains and the flowered china had flown away at the sound of distress that she could help to soothe; and she now eagerly tied her bonnet, gave her mother a hasty kiss, and followed Mrs. Simmons to her house, which was not more than a few doors off. The poor woman was far too anxious to delay a moment. Her son, who was apprenticed in the nearest market-town, was ill of a rheumatic fever; her husband was working at a railway some miles off; and though she had been longing to see her boy, she was too weakly to walk both ways; so this opportunity was most welcome. The children were very cross, and it was a

long time before Rachel could nurse them into good humour; but her soft, loving ways told upon them at last, and the baby fell asleep to her gentle singing; and then little Polly was willing to sit on Rachel's knee and hear stories. But for any trouble Rachel was well repaid by the mother's thankfulness when she came back again.

Her son had been overjoyed to see her; he said that it had done him a world of good. He was sadly altered, and had still great pain; but the doctor said he had taken a turn for the better, and she had had the comfort of seeing that the tailor and his wife, to whom her son was apprenticed, were kind, good people, and did not grudge the trouble that his illness caused.

Then Rachel went home; and finding the house still empty, she made the fire on, and then went a little way up the shrubbery to watch for her mother's coming. It was not very long before she saw both her father and her mother coming, and ran to meet them.

"Here's a good girl, I'm sure," said her father, taking hold of Rachel's hand.

"And how is poor John Simmons?" asked her mother.

Rachel told them, and then skipped on merrily beside them till they reached their own door. When they had settled down for the evening, her mother pulled out an orange and a piece of cake that Mrs. Fothergill had sent for her god-daughter; and her father took Rachel to her favourite place, upon his knee, and whispered to her that she had done quite right to give up her own pleasure for the good of other people: but Rachel scarcely needed this praise, precious as it was, to make her feel, what she

had experienced already, that the sweetest pleasure is a work of love.

Before I proceed with this loving little Rachel's history, I think I must tell you something more about her home. Rachel was born, and had always lived, in this quiet village of Boston-upon-Hale. Her father had been many years in the service of Mr. Sinclair, the owner of Boston Hall, and of nearly all the village; he was now head gardener, and was much trusted by his master and the steward, Mr. Lamb. Stephen Dunn had married a respectable young woman, who was then, as we have said, housemaid at the Hall, and his home was a very happy one. Rachel was their only child; and if she was not spoiled by their affection, it was because they looked upon her as a gift from God, to be trained up by them in His fear and love.

Rachel's home stood in Mr. Sinclair's grounds, although the back, or front as it rather seemed, of the cottage opened on the village. It was not more than two hundred yards from the Hall, and a broad winding walk led from it, through the shrubberies, to the conservatory that adjoined the drawing-room. This conservatory opened also upon a large, smooth green lawn, that spread along the front of the fine old hall. There were beds of flowers on this lawn, and rustic seats and a few old trees; and turning round the corner of the house, you came upon a pretty flower-garden that was overlooked by what had been poor Mrs. Sinclair's morning room, now fitted up, as Rachel knew afterwards, for Miss Emmeline and her governess. The kitchen-gardens were partly behind the house, and also, hid by the shrubberies, extended to the gardener's cottage; and the whole stood in a small

park, which was divided from the village, that ran along one side of it, by a belt of walnut and horsechestnut-trees, and a high stone wall. Such was the pleasant home to which, in the full summer-time, the widowed Mr. Sinclair at last brought his daughter.

Rachel was very curious to see the young lady for whom so much preparation had been made, and her heart beat as the time drew near on the day when they were expected to arrive. The villagers had intended to express their pleasure at their squire's return to live amongst them, by going in procession to the gates to meet him; and it had been proposed, to their great delight, that the girls of the school should be dressed in white, and scatter flowers before the carriage. But all this was put a stop to by the steward. He made it known to the villagers that this show of rejoicing would be very painful to Mr. Sinclair on his return to a place which he had left in so much sorrow; and he requested as a favour that no public notice might be taken of their arrival.

The school children were very much disappointed when they found that they were not to scatter flowers, nor even to have a holiday on the occasion. And when five o'clock came, and no squire had yet arrived, many of the girls declared that they would go to the grand entrance, which was a quarter of a mile from the village, and have a peep at the young heiress. Ellen Smith forgot her jealousy of Rachel, and asked her to walk with them to the lodge. Rachel thought it would be very nice, and ran home to have her tea, and ask her mother if she might go. But her mother said, "No, Rachel, it was the master's desire that no notice should be taken of his arrival; and it would ill become the Boston girls, and particularly

your father's little girl, to be standing staring at them."

So Rachel went back to tell Ellen Smith what her mother had said. But the girls only laughed at her for her pains; and Fanny Gill said she meant to climb upon the wall, if she could not get a look of Miss Sinclair any other way. When Rachel reached home again, she was surprised to see her mother dressed in her Paisley shawl and her black silk bonnet.

"Can mother be going to take me there herself?" thought Rachel. But this idea was soon put aside when her mother said, "As you have been put off your walk with Ellen, Rachel, you shall go out with me. I want to know how old Betty Eppleby is going on; and as it is such a fine night, we will go and see her now."

Rachel was very glad, for a walk with her dear mother was a real treat. Betty Eppleby lived at the almshouses about a mile from Boston, and the road led through some pleasant fields. When they had nearly reached the almshouses, Rachel's mother pointed out to her the house at which she used to stay with her grandfather, who was a small farmer there, that she might come to school at Boston, and Rachel smiled to think that she was treading the same path along which her mother had gone backwards and forwards forty years ago.

From the fields they turned into a lane, and soon came near to the hospital for old widows, a row of neat houses with small gardens before them. It was in the first of these that Betty lived; and they stopped at the little gate, and went through the garden, which contained a thriving crop of potatoes, some cabbages, and a plant of rhubarb. A monthly rose-tree climbed over the

front of the house, and some of its flowers were peeping in at the latticed window. Mrs. Dunn knocked at the door; a sort of grunt was the only answer, and she went in.

It was a tidy little room, containing some chairs and two small tables, a good clock in one corner, some shelves of crockery and pans, and at one side a shut-up bed. Sitting by the fire in an old arm-chair, leaning with both hands upon a stick, sat an old woman, with a long nose and grey, piercing eyes. She looked up as Rachel and her mother entered, and her eyes twinkled, but she said nothing.

"How d'ye do, Betty?" said Mrs. Dunn, going up to her and taking hold of one of the withered hands.

"Bad, very bad," said the old woman, scanning her visitors from head to foot, but giving them no sign of welcome.

"This is my daughter Rachel, Betty; she has never been to see you before."

"Ugh," grunted the old woman,—at length adding, "Won't you sit down?"

Mrs. Dunn took a chair opposite to Betty, who then pointed with her stick to a milking-stool that stood near the door, and said to Rachel, "Sit ye down."

Rachel obeyed at once, a good deal frightened; but Betty was not satisfied.

"What's the use of going so far off the fire?" she said; "ye'll catch cold."

So Rachel brought the stool close to her mother, and gladly sat down under her protection.

This being settled, Rachel's mother said, "And how have you been, Betty, since I saw you last?"

"Ugh! very bad," replied the old woman; "I gets worse and worse; can't sleep for rheumatics in my back."

"That is a pity," said Mrs. Dunn. "Have you tried anything for it, Betty?"

"Tried! I've tried enough! I's tired of your doctor's stuff," grumbled Betty.

"It is not pleasant, certainly," said Mrs. Dunn; "but I think something to rub your back with——"

"Nay, nay," interrupted the old woman. "Who is I to get to rub me?"

"One of your neighbours, I thought, would be glad to come," said Mrs. Dunn. "You are like to be all friendly here."

"Like enough, maybe," grumbled Betty again. "Why there isn't one on 'em cares whether I am alive or dead. I shan't live long to trouble them, that is one comfort."

"Oh, Betty, don't say so! There is Jenny Brown, I'm sure."

"Jenny Brown!" cried Betty, "t'worst among 'em. Ay, t'worst, 'cause she's t'greatest hypocrite. When t'parson comes, there's none of us so good as Jenny Brown. She lays her Bible out upon the table, and she talks to him like a sermon. Give me practice, I say, and none of your doctrine."

"Well, you know, Betty," said Mrs. Dunn, "doctrine and practice should go hand in hand: doctrine shown by practice, that is the way. But there is Esther Jones; only I am afraid she could not help you much, because she has got a lame hand."

"Ay, she's got a lame hand, but she's not got a lame foot: she can walk fast enough to the gentry's houses,

and beg for meat, or shoes, or anything. I'd scorn to be beholden for anything to a tramp like Esther Jones."

"Come, come, Betty," said Mrs. Dunn, "I think this rheumatism makes you think badly of your neighbours. They all have a better side, you know; and it would be pleasanter to look at that. We should not like them to be poking out our faults. But could not I rub your back a little now, while I'm here? You might sleep all the better for it to-night."

"No, no, thank you," said Betty, shaking her head; "I don't feel it now, and I can get the girl that comes to clean up for Peggy Johnson to rub me at bedtime. She's made such a noise about herself, has Peggy Johnson, that they've allowed her a girl to help her. Ugh!"

"That is very nice for her," said Mrs. Dunn, "and it is pleasant for you to think that when you need it, you will be allowed the same. This is a good home for you, Betty, in your old age, with all your little comforts round you; and pussy, too, I see, she must be quite a companion to you."

"Ay, poor pussy," said Betty; showing by the loving glance she gave to the black cat that lay beside her, that there is a tender place in every heart. "We're very good company, pussy and I."

"Well, we must be going now, Rachel," said Mrs. Dunn, getting up, with a cheerful smile. "I have brought you a string of onions, Betty. We have grown some fine ones in our own garden this year."

"Oh, well," said Betty, looking almost pleased; "an onion comes in useful, when one has nothing better. Good night, and thank you for calling."

Mrs. Dunn went out, and Rachel followed her as soon

as possible. She would not have liked to be left long alone with Betty Eppleby.

"I meant to have gone into Jenny Brown's for a few minutes," said her mother, as they went through Betty's garden; "but I am afraid we have not time. Still I should like to ask her how her grandchild is. I think we will look in."

So they turned back, and went to the next door to Betty's. As her mother knocked, Rachel could not help wishing that Jenny Brown might not be in; but when, in answer to a cheerful "Come in," they went into the house, Rachel soon changed her opinion.

"O Mrs. Dunn, how d'ye do?" said a fresh-looking little old woman, who was knitting beside the table in the window. "Pray come in;" and she laid down her knitting, and rose to greet them. "This is yours, I know," she added, shaking hands with Rachel. "The picture of yourself, as I remember you gathering mushrooms in the hill-side pasture. Won't you sit down?"

"No thank you, Jenny," said Rachel's mother; "we have been sitting a good while with Betty Eppleby."

"Oh, have you now?" said Jenny; "I am very glad of that. It would cheer her up a bit, poor thing! She suffers dreadfully at times."

"I am afraid she does," said Mrs. Dunn; "but how is your grandson, Jenny? that is what I called to ask."

"Thank you, Mrs. Dunn," replied Jenny, "they think he improves a little; but it can only be for a time. I went over in a cart last week to see him. Farmer Gubbins was so kind as to take me, when he went to market, and I'm sure it did me good to see the lad. He

is but young, and the pain is sometimes awful; but he is so patient through it all, and his only care is not to put his mother about with groaning. He was always a regular attender at church and Sunday-school when he was well, and he has now an opportunity of putting in practice what he learnt there. Poor Jamie; we cannot be very anxious about him, for we trust that he is one of Christ's little ones;" and, as she spoke, the old woman brushed away a tear that trembled in her eye. "Your little girl will go to the school, Mrs. Dunn?"

"Since she was five years old," replied Rachel's mother, "and she likes it well."

"Ay, and prize it too," said Jenny, putting her hand gently on Rachel's shoulder. "You have been called to great honour, to the honour of being a Christian. Be sure you spare no pains to learnt how to live like one. Then when you come to be like Jamie, though it may not be for scores of years, you will know how to die like one."

"You have the best comfort if you lose him," said Mrs. Dunn. "And how are all your other neighbours here?"

"In their best fashion, I think," said Jenny. "They have allowed Peggy Johnson a girl to help her, now that she is so infirm, which is a great blessing to her; and Esther Jones has been to stay at Miss Percival's, where she was nurse so long, you know, and they have been very kind to her; and she brought me back with her that pot of mignonette that is in the window. It is very sweet, and Esther says they told her it would bloom all through the winter. Then there's Jane Binks; she is only poorly just now; but she has got a niece to

stay with her,—a pretty girl she is, and as good as she is pretty. The last house, you will know, is empty, since poor Becca died. I wonder who we shall have next? Whoever comes, it will be a pleasant, peaceful home for them; and we should be very thankful to the pious man that founded it, and to Him who put it in his heart to do it. . . . And you won't sit down?"

"No, thank you," said Mrs. Dunn; and they now bid the contented Jenny Brown, good night, and crossed her tidy garden into the lane again.

"Oh, mother," said Rachel, as soon as she could get beside her mother to talk to her; "how could that nasty old woman speak as she did of Jenny Brown?"

"Hush, my Rachel," said Mrs. Dunn, gravely. "Our Saviour died for Betty, too; we must not call her names. She was in a more fretful mood to-day than I have ever seen her in before; but she is much to be pitied. Racked with pain in her body, but worse to bear than that, without God's peace in her mind. Betty was a hard-working honest woman in her youth, but she had many troubles, and I fear she did not make the right use of them; for her temper has become soured, and she is left now in the world, with no relations, and few friends, except such kind creatures as Jenny, who are ready, like the good Samaritan, to call any one in need their neighbour. Now, Rachel, this is the hill pasture, where you heard that I used to gather mushrooms; and, look from here, you can see the Hall quite plain."

"Oh, yes," cried Rachel, running on a little, that she might see it plainer. "It is like a picture. There is the roof of the conservatory, and Mrs. Fothergill's window, and the shrubberies, and there is our kitchen

chimney, I know it is, just peeping out above the trees."

"I see it," said her mother. "Now, Rachel, we will go across this stile, into the road and home the other way."

They had walked some distance along the road, talking together, as little Rachel and her mother often talked, when they were disturbed by the rumbling of wheels behind them.

"Is that the waggon coming, mother?" said Rachel.

"I think not," replied her mother, and went on talking. The rumbling got nearer; surely it could not be a waggon to come so quickly. Rachel peeped over her shoulder. It was a carriage and four horses. The truth darted on her at once. This was the Squire coming home. Her heart beat fast, as her mother pressed her hand, and led her into the grass at the side of the road to be out of the way, for the carriage was now nearly close behind. Then she stood still, and as it passed she made a deep respectful courtesy, Rachel did the same. A gentleman who was in the carriage bowed. Opposite to him sat a grave lady, she only bowed. But beyond the gentleman, a sweet, fair face, stretched forward and smiled at them. That must be Miss Sinclair, Rachel felt. Then the carriage and four horses, postillions, ladies' maid, and footman rattled on, and they were left behind.

When Rachel had found her breath again, she said, "Oh, mother, you brought me here on purpose."

Her mother smiled, and as Rachel pressed her hand gratefully, she thought that no one ever had so kind a mother.

CHAPTER II.

“From the Devil and his dangers,
From the pomp and pride of life,
Lord, as pilgrims and as strangers,
Keep us in the holy strife.”—PARISH MUSINGS.

THE next time that Rachel saw Miss Sinclair was at church. The seats of the Sunday scholars were in the aisle that led to the large square pew, which belonged to the Squire, and just before the prayers began, a rustling of silk was heard: Fanny Gill, who was her neighbour, pushed Rachel's arm to make her look up, and she saw Mr. Sinclair followed by his daughter very richly dressed, and the other lady. Rachel bent her eyes upon her book again, for she knew how wrong it was to look about in church; but her thoughts, I grieve to say, often wandered to that corner of the large square pew, where the edge of that pretty pink silk bonnet might be seen.

The next day, as Rachel was coming home from school, she saw the fair young face again. Miss Sinclair was driving the other lady, whom Rachel now knew to be her governess, Mrs. Meadowes, in a low pony-carriage, and a servant was riding behind them. Rachel ran into the house to tell her mother; and all that noon she could talk about nothing else but Miss Sinclair and her ponies.

“Are you top to-day, Rachel?” asked her mother.

“No,” said Rachel, hanging down her head. “I'm

only fourth. I hadn't my multiplication-table off. I could not say six times, at all."

"That is very strange, Rachel," said her mother. "You must learn it afresh, and I will hear you say it at night."

"Father wants you to be a good counter, you know, then you will be able to help him with his books."

When Rachel went to school that afternoon, her mother gave her a letter of her father's to put in the post, and told her to be sure to leave it at the post-office as she went, that it might be in time. Nothing pleased Rachel more than to be useful, and she smiled as she said, "I'll be sure, mother, to put it in."

But Rachel did not smile when she came back from school at five o'clock. She looked hot and flurried; and no sooner saw her mother than she burst out crying.

"Oh, mother!" she sobbed, "please don't be angry, but I forgot the letter."

"Oh, Rachel?" said her mother, "how was that?"

"I was going straight to the post-office," said Rachel, crying all the time, "and I met some of the girls, and they said that Miss Sinclair's pony-carriage was coming down the cross-lanes, and so I put the letter in my pocket, and went to the corner to see her go past, and then I never remembered about the letter 'till the school clock struck four, and then I couldn't help crying, and I spoiled my work, and the mistress scolded me. Oh, mother, I am so sorry!"

"You may well be sorry," said her mother, gravely. "It was very naughty of you, and it will be a long time before I can trust you again. I don't know what your father will say. Put your bonnet off, and sit down there till he comes in."

So instead of helping her mother to make tea ready, as she was used to do, Rachel sat still in the corner, thinking what a naughty girl she had been. But she would never be so foolish again—to that she made up her mind,—and her tears stopped, and she waited for her father's coming.

He was surprised that there was no Rachel standing on the door-step or in the garden to meet him, and still more so, when he came in, and saw her sitting in the corner. But as soon as Rachel saw him, she looked at her mother, to see if she might, and then she went to him, holding out the letter, and said, "Please, father, I forgot to put the letter in the post."

"Hey day!" exclaimed her father, "here is a pretty business, the seeds that master was so particular about. I may not get them now. How could you be so careless, child?"

Rachel's face, on hearing this, was puckering up afresh to cry, and she could scarcely say, "I'm very sorry, father."

"Come, come," said her father, softening, for he could not bear to see his little Rachel in distress. "It is not your fault, that the letter was of such consequence; but how came you to forget it? Give us some tea, wife," he continued, sitting down; "and let me hear how it happened."

"Shall I tell, Rachel?" said her mother. "You must know, father, that this silly little girl's head has been so running upon our young lady at the Hall, that I believe she has thought about nothing else all day. She has lost her place at school, and when she should have been going with your letter, she was running off with

some of the other girls, to see Miss Emmeline in her pony-carriage."

"I am very sorry about it, father," said Rachel, humbly.

"That I am sure she is," said her mother, "I think you must forgive her, father, if you please; and I hope this will be a lesson to her, to be more steady, and not to let the girls tempt her away from her duty."

"She knows what her duty is well enough," said her father, who all the time was longing to take her on his knee, and comfort her. "I wonder she should have been so silly! Come, Rachel, tell us what your god-fathers and godmothers promised for you, and you are bound to do."

Rachel put her hands behind her, and repeated the answer in the Catechism.

"Yes," said her father. "'To renounce the pomps and vanities of the world.' You can't be doing that, you see, if you are letting your mind run on hats and feathers and pony-carriages and things above your station. It is quite natural you should want to see our young lady, and a pretty creature she is too; but if it makes you selfish, thinking about your own pleasure, and forgetting what you have to do in your own place, then it is sinful. You will be more careful after this, won't you, my girl? Now reach me my cup, and let us have tea."

And so was Rachel checked in what might have become a snare for her—her excessive interest in the young heiress.

A few days after this, it was the holiday afternoon, and Rachel's father had set her to tie up some carnations

in the garden behind their house. This part was really their own; and at the low end of it, where it was crossed by the shrubbery walk, they made it quite ornamental.

It was a hot day, so Rachel took her bonnet off, and she was hanging it on the branch of a walnut-tree, when a great dog ran up to her, and began sniffing round her. Rachel gave a little scream, for she was startled, and her bonnet fell to the ground; but a sweet voice called out, "Come away, Nero, here, sir. Do not frighten the little girl;" and Rachel looking up, saw Miss Sinclair and her governess standing close beside her. This startled her much more than the great dog had done, and she turned very red, as she dropped her lowest courtesy.

"Are you tying up my carnations, little girl?" said Miss Sinclair, with her hand on Nero's collar.

"Please, ma'am, these are our own," said Rachel, courtesying again. "I am Rachel Dunn."

"Rachel Dunn, are you?" repeated the young lady, "and pray, little Rachel, where do you come from?"

"My dear," interrupted the governess, "you are frightening the child."

"Oh, please, Mrs. Meadows," said Miss Sinclair, "let me talk to her a little. She is such a droll creature. Well, where do you come from?"

"Please, ma'am, my father is the head-gardener," said Rachel, with some pride. "We live there."

"Oh! you are the gardener's child, are you? Then I know you very well. You are the daughter of Sarah, the head-housemaid, you are Fothergill's god-daughter, you are the best reader in the school, and you hemmed papa's new handkerchiefs. Now, don't you think I am a witch, little Rachel?"

Rachel laughed a merry laugh, and looked up in Miss Sinclair's face. She was not frightened now, but she blushed to think that Miss Sinclair knew so much about her.

"Well, I shall come and hear you read in the school," continued the young lady. "At least, if there is not a horrible smell in it."

"My dear," said Mrs. Meadows, "you should not put such ideas into the child's head."

"Well," said Miss Sinclair, wilfully; "if it has not an odious smell, it is the first charity school I ever heard of that had not. However, papa says I must make my appearance there, so I suppose I must; and, indeed, I shall certainly go, if it is only to hear this droll child read."

And without another word to Rachel, Miss Sinclair and her governess passed on.

For many days after this Rachel was disturbed at her lessons, with the idea of Miss Sinclair's visit; and she could not help looking sometimes at the door of the schoolroom, as if she expected to see the tall, slight young lady, with her long golden curls, falling from under her black hat and feathers, standing there and saying, with that refined accent, but commanding tone, "You droll creature, come and read to me."

It was all that Rachel could do to put these thoughts out of her head and mind her multiplication-table. But one night her father told them that Miss Sinclair had got a bad cold, so Rachel knew why she had not come to the school.

"The master is uneasy about her, they say," added Stephen; "he seems to dote upon her, and I am afraid

he indulges her too much. They say she got her cold with running out to see the waterfall by moonlight, spite of all her governess could say. Don't let us spoil our Rachel, wife," continued her father; and Rachel smiled at the idea of her being compared with their young lady.

It was the day after this, when Rachel was just setting out for school, that there was a knock at the garden-door, and both Rachel and her mother were quite astonished to see Mrs. Fothergill come in. It was not often that the housekeeper could be spared from the Hall, particularly now when the family were at home.

"I thought you would be rather surprised to see me drop in at this time of day," said the good woman, when she had kissed Rachel, and sat down in the chair that Mrs. Dunn had placed for her; "but my young lady would have me come myself, and my errand is to take Rachel back with me."

Rachel started with surprise and pleasure, while her mother began to make some objections, but was stopped by Mrs. Fothergill's saying,—

"Yes, Sarah, I know all that you would say; but you must not say it, please; for nothing less will serve Miss Sinclair than have this droll child, as she calls her, to come and play with her this afternoon, and come she must."

"I am sure I ought to feel pleased that she has taken notice of our Rachel; but you know, Mrs. Fothergill, I am afraid of her getting notions above her station, and wanting things that she cannot have at home. This is the first time, but it may not be the last, and one does not know how it will end."

"Well," said Mrs. Fothergill, "you may rely upon

me. I will take care of my godchild; and I am sure Rachel has been so well brought up that you need not fear for her."

"No, no, Mrs. Fothergill," said Rachel's mother; "I will not say but she is a dear good child upon the whole; but she is easily attracted by the fineries of the world that she has nothing to do with."

"Well but, Sarah," said the housekeeper, who was determined to gain her point, "I don't think it is kind in you, who have waited on her own sweet mother, to refuse to gratify Miss Sinclair,—when she is ill, too, and is just longing to have Rachel."

"Well, you may take the child," said Mrs. Dunn, reluctantly; "but, Rachel, listen to me—no, stop, go and put on your Sunday shoes and stockings. Those are not fit for the carpets at the Hall. She need not change any thing else, Mrs. Fothergill?"

"No, indeed, I am sure she is as nice as a new pin, in that neat lilac print and clean pinafore." So Rachel went to change her shoes, and then Mrs. Fothergill continued, in a lower tone, "Have you heard anything lately about the Taylors, Sarah. We want an under-house-maid; that silly lass, Peggy Short, has set her heart upon being married to one of Colonel Murray's under-grooms, with may be twelve shillings a-week to keep her on. She does not know when she is well off, as I have told her to no purpose; however, as I was saying, one of the Taylors—Jane, I think, a nice-looking girl,—came after the place yesterday; but Betty, that is the new coachman's wife, had been told that she had a character for being dishonest, so of course I could have nothing to do with her."

"I have heard such a report," said Mrs. Dunn; "but it was from a person that might be mistaken, and it would be a sad thing if the poor young girl were to lose her bread from being belied."

"But there is generally some foundation for these reports," replied the other.

"That is what people say," said Mrs. Dunn; "and that is the way that the bloom, as one may say, is taken from a person's character. I am going to inquire into the matter for poor Jane's sake, and, if you like, I will tell you what I make out."

"Please do, Sarah, and here is Rachel; so I will not stop any longer. Come, my dear."

"Good bye, mother," said Rachel.

"Good bye, my dear," replied her mother. "Now, remember, Rachel, that you are going to what may be a place of temptation for you; do not forget what you said to your father the other day, and be modest and humble."

So when Rachel set off through the shrubberies, holding her godmother's hand, she felt quite sobered, and almost frightened at the idea of the new world she was going into.

Not that the Hall was new to her. In her frequent visits to Mrs. Fothergill, she had wandered through every nook and corner of it, when the light used to stream into the deserted rooms through the half-closed shutters, making fantastic shadows on the walls and floor; and when her voice used to echo through the hollow-sounding passages, until she scarcely dared to raise it. But now all was very different. After Rachel had taken off her bonnet in the old familiar room, Mrs. Fothergill took

her upstairs, and she found herself in a long corridor, softly carpeted, with the sweet fresh air coming in through a stained-glass window, that was thrown wide open. They stopped before a door at the other end, and on being told to come in, Mrs. Fothergill led Rachel into the morning-room, of which we have before spoken. This was a nice square room, with a large bow-window overlooking the sweet flower-garden, and it was furnished with pretty muslin curtains and a flowery carpet; and it had pictures and maps upon the walls, and a piano and a harp, and several bookcases, and some workboxes, and many other little things that Rachel did not even know the names of. There was a vase of fragrant flowers upon one table, a globe of gold-fish upon another, and a canary in a gilt cage hanging in the window.

Near to the canary, Mrs. Meadows was at a table writing, and beside her, lying upon a low couch, so placed that she could see into the garden, was the young lady herself, dressed in a loose blue and white muslin gown, tied round the waist with a broad blue ribbon.

She started up when they came in, and exclaimed,—“Oh, you dear, good Fothergill; I am so glad you have brought me the droll Rachel to amuse me. Why, Mrs. Meadows thought you could not be back this half-hour.”

“My god-daughter had her bonnet on to go to school, ma’am,” replied the housekeeper, “so she was ready to come up with me at once. Will you please, ma’am, to send Rachel to my room, when you have done with her?”

“Oh, yes, Fothergill, but I have not done with her yet,” said Miss Sinclair, as the housekeeper retired. “So you were just going to school, Rachel? Are you

not glad to come here, instead of going into that odious smell? faugh!"—and the young lady made a face of disgust, while Rachel, confused with the rapid change of scene, could only smile and courtesy.

"Now, come, Rachel," continued Miss Sinclair, "you need not stand courtesying there, you are to play with me, you know; come close to me here."

Rachel crept up to the corner of Miss Sinclair's couch.

"Now, tell me what games you can play at?"

"We play at tickey touch-wood, and mulberry-bush, and those things on the green," said Rachel; "but we don't play in the house."

"What funny names!" cried Miss Sinclair, laughing. "If I had not this tiresome cold, there are *Les Graces*, and many games that we could enjoy upon the lawn; but I want something to do now."

"You might show Rachel your large doll, and your tea-things," suggested the governess.

"Oh, yes, to be sure, I can," said the young lady. "I have nearly given up my dolls, but I dare say that you would like to see them. And my beautiful baby-house, that my godpapa, Lord Errol, sent me from Germany; I will show you that, too, Rachel."

"Not to-day, my dear," said Mrs. Meadows, "you must not go out of the room, you know."

"How provoking!" exclaimed Miss Sinclair. "I wish I had not a cold. Please, Mrs. Meadows, send for my dolls."

The bell was rung, and Elton, Miss Sinclair's maid, was told to bring her young lady's dolls, and she returned with seven, of different sizes, all dressed in the prettiest manner. Rachel was delighted, and Miss





Sinclair made her sit down beside her on the couch, that she might examine them all, and nurse them too, if she liked. Then she had to see the set of tea-things that was for their use. Delicate little white cups and saucers, with pink rosebuds on them, and sugar-basin, cream-jug, tea-pot, and plates to match.

Rachel's evident enjoyment of the sight of all these treasures amused Miss Sinclair greatly, and she made Elton bring all the toys that she could find to show her. By this time they were great friends, and Rachel had almost forgotten that it was the young lady at the Hall that she was laughing with, and talking to so unceremoniously. But Mrs. Meadows had not forgotten, she was watching and listening carefully, as Mr. Sinclair had desired, lest Rachel should prove an unfit companion for his dearly-cherished daughter. She soon saw that there was no danger, for the child's language, though homely, was free from rough and vulgar words; and her manners were mild and gentle; for her mother had always striven to implant in her that true refinement which is a bond between all ranks, and springs from Christian charity—that charity which is kind.

When they were tired of the toys—at least, when Miss Sinclair was tired of showing them—Mrs. Meadows reminded her that she had wished to hear Rachel read.

“Delightful!” cried the young lady, and ran to fetch one of her own story-books. “Now, Rachel, you shall read this piece about a good girl in a village; it will just suit you.”

Rachel took the book, and held it carefully with both hands, and stood up quite straight, as if she had been reading to one of the ladies from the Rectory.

"Bravo!" cried Miss Sinclair, clapping her hands. "Look, Mrs. Meadows, how she stands. Don't you wish I were so good?"

"Be quiet, Emmeline," said her governess; "your frivolity puts Rachel out of countenance."

"But she is such fun," pleaded Emmeline. "Well, go on, little Rachel."

So Rachel read a few sentences.

"Wonderful!" cried Miss Sinclair again; "I thought all the school-children read in that sing-song way that they did in Scotland. Does she not read well, Mrs. Meadows?"

"Very nicely indeed," replied that lady. "Go on, my dear." And Rachel finished the page.

Then Mrs. Meadows asked her to spell some words, and questioned her upon what she had read, and Rachel answered so well, that Mrs. Meadows said, "You have been very well taught, and are quite a credit to the Boston School. I must tell Mr. Sinclair." And Rachel's cheeks burnt with pleasure at the praise.

"And what else do you learn at school, little Rachel?" said Miss Sinclair, who had now lain down again upon her couch.

"Accounts, and writing, and geography; and we sew in the afternoon," answered Rachel.

"What kind of sewing?" said Miss Sinclair.

"I hem towels, and sheets, and things; and I am going to help to make father's shirts now," said Rachel, proudly.

"How your fingers must ache!" said Miss Sinclair, as she looked with pity from her own slender white hands to Rachel's chubby ones. "And then when you leave

the school, do you play at those games with queer names upon the green?"

"Sometimes I do," said Rachel; "but I have to help mother in the house, because she has only me, and I have to see what people want."

"What kind of people, what do you mean?" asked Miss Sinclair.

"Poor sick people. There is Nanny Briggs, that is deaf and cannot cook for herself; and there is Tom Bean's wife, that has the rheumatism; and there is Mary Simmons sometimes to help with the children; and there is poor old Nelly to read to; and now there is Betty at the hospital, for though she is so cross, mother says she is to be pitied."

"Do you help all these poor people?" exclaimed Miss Sinclair in surprise; "do you give them money?"

"No," said Rachel, "we send them anything we can spare, and mother says what we give away is never missed; and some of them only want cleaning up for, or things of that sort."

"Why, she is quite like a Sister of Charity; is she not, Mrs. Meadows? She should have a long white veil on, like those you were reading to me about. I think I should like to help somebody; but I could not go into their dirty cottages."

"They are not dirty," said Rachel, eagerly; "except Jenny Eseriggs, at least; and it is no use cleaning up for her, for she lets the pig come into the house."

"The pig come into the house!" cried Miss Sinclair. "Oh, fancy, living with a pig. Suppose we had a pig in this room, lying on the hearth-rug, for instance."

And Miss Emmeline rolled back with laughter.

Rachel laughed, too, at the idea of Jenny Escrigg's grunting pig lying upon the roses of that pretty hearth-rug.

But Miss Sinclair had laughed until she had made herself cough, so Mrs. Meadows said that she had talked quite long enough, and that Rachel had now better go home.

Miss Emmeline demurred ; she must hear some more of these droll things, she said ; but Rachel got up at once, and made her courtesy, and Mrs. Meadows rang the bell and told Elton to take her down to the housekeeper's room, and Miss Sinclair added, "And tell Fothergill, Elton, to give her something nice ; and mind, little Rachel, that you come and make me laugh to-morrow."

When Elton gave Mrs. Fothergill her message, that good woman was hot and flurried and in the midst of preparing some very particular dish for her master's dinner ; and she had only just time to give Rachel a hasty kiss and a little tartlet from a dish of fresh-baked pastry that stood near, and to tell her to go straight home again to her mother ; and as Rachel passed the kitchen and pantry windows, she saw many strange servants passing backwards and forwards, or earnestly engaged like Mrs. Fothergill. Then she tripped merrily through the shrubberies, and through their own little garden, and tapped, in jest, at the door, till her mother's voice said, "Come in ;" and then little Rachel popped her head in, with a merry laugh, and enjoyed her mother's surprise and pleasure. You would have thought that Rachel had been off on a long journey, so glad did her mother seem to receive her little one back again ; whilst Rachel, for

her part, could scarcely believe that she had only left after dinner, and that it was now only tea-time. But she had come home in time to set the tea-things, that was one comfort; and she was soon so busy that she could not talk until her father came home to tea.

Then she had to tell all her adventures: how changed everything was in the Hall, how busy all the servants were, and how hot Mrs. Fothergill was; and how well the flower-garden looked from Miss Sinclair's window; how she had read to them, and how the governess had praised her. And then she described to them everything in the pretty morning-room, even to the real silver inkstand; and her mother said she remembered many of the things were there when she was housemaid, and they were what her sweet mistress valued most, and she was glad that the young lady kept them. But, after all, Rachel thought the nicest part of her visit to the Hall was the telling her father and mother about it when she came home.

"Well but, Rachel," said her father, "among all these fine things you have not told us about the finest of them all, and that is the young mistress. How do you like her?"

"She is beautiful," said Rachel, warmly.

"That she is," replied her father; "but how do you like her, Rachel?"

"I don't know," answered Rachel, after considering for a minute.

"Not know whether you like her or not, that is queer, my girl," said her father, stirring his tea.

"Rachel is right to say so, if she is not quite sure," observed her mother; "she has scarcely had time yet to judge."

“ Well, mother,” said Rachel, “ Miss Sinclair showed me all her beautiful things, and she made me sit down close beside her, and she talked to me all the time ; but, mother, I think she was making game of me. Still,” said Rachel, looking up again, “ I should like to be always beside her—if I could be with you too, I mean,” added Rachel, in a great hurry, and taking hold of her mother’s gown, as if she had said something that might separate them ; and the mother kissed her little girl, and felt now that all the splendour of the world could not draw Rachel’s heart away from her.

CHAPTER III.

“Not alone kind words will render,
Though their power is strange and deep ;
More than comforts we'll surrender,
Rather than leave one to weep ;
None shall fear, or faint, or sorrow,
But we'll act a brother's part.”

PARISH MUSINGS.

WHEN they had finished tea, and Rachel's father had gone to his work again, her mother told her that she might put her bonnet on, and they would go and do some errands in the village.

“Oh then, mother,” said Rachel, “may I call and leave poor Ralph the tartlet on our way?”

Her mother said she might; and Rachel went to the cupboard, where she had put the tartlet when she came in from the Hall, and folded it in a piece of paper to take to her poor neighbour.

Ralph was a child of about six years old, who had lost the use of his limbs; indeed, he had never been able to walk, and Rachel was always pleased when she could take him anything nice—and she had saved her tart on purpose. When she had nothing else for him, she would give him a cheerful nod and smile, or stop to talk to him awhile, as he sat in a little chair at his mother's door; and the little boy had learnt to watch for Rachel passing to and from school, as for something that would be

always pleasant to him. He had missed her this afternoon, and his mother said that he had been quite unhappy about it; and now it seemed doubtful whether his eyes sparkled most at the sight of the pretty tart, or at the sight of the kind little friend who brought it. From Ralph they went to the schoolmistress, that they might explain why Rachel had not been at school that afternoon. The schoolmistress said that Rachel was generally such a good girl, and came so regularly, she was sure she would not grudge her a little pleasure; and after Rachel's mother had had a little more talk with her, they moved on to Mrs. Taylor's, which was at the further end of the village.

This was not a house that Mrs. Dunn often came to, because she did not much like or respect Mr. and Mrs. Taylor; but this time she came upon an errand of charity. Instead of spreading the story farther, by asking other people about it, Mrs. Dunn thought it would be kinder to go at once to Jane herself, and ask if she could explain or contradict the report of her dishonesty. As it happened, Jane, with her bonnet on, opened the door as they came up to it, and Mrs. Dunn said, "It was you I came to see, but if your mother is at home, I will just step in and ask her how she is."

Jane's face had been covered with smiles when she first saw her little schoolfellow, and the friend who had always been so kind to her; but the next minute she blushed painfully, as she replied,—

"Mother has gone out, but sister Dale is here with us. Will you come in and see her?"

This was the eldest daughter, who had married foolishly when she was very young, and who often came back to

stay with her mother; and it was said at these times that she had run away from her husband's ill-treatment, provoked by her own ill-temper.

Mrs. Dunn would never listen to these tales; but they might have seemed to be confirmed by the wretched, discontented expression of the young woman's haggard face, as she sat in the corner of the kitchen, rocking her chair backwards and forwards to soothe a young child, who was crying fretfully.

Mrs. Dunn went in and spoke very kindly to her, and inquired what was the matter with the child. Mrs. Dunn had never been a favourite of Harriet Dale's, and she answered her friendly question very shortly. "The boy was teething and he was always cross. He had had convulsions last week with it. No, she had not had the doctor; it was only people who were well off in the world that could afford to send for him when their poor children were ailing. The parish doctor? No, indeed, she was not come quite so low as that, thank Heaven!" But at length she let Mrs. Dunn take the child in her arms, and when her gentle nursing had quieted him, and he opened his eyes and smiled at his mother, the latter became more amiable, and thanked Mrs. Dunn for the offer of a bottle which had cured many children, and which she said Rachel should bring over in the morning. Mrs. Dunn kissed the boy, and giving him back to his mother, bid her good evening, and then she asked Jane if she would walk a little way with them?

Jane blushed and hesitated, and said she thought Harriet would want her; but Harriet said, "No, indeed, Jane always tried to make her seem in the way;" so Jane was obliged to go.

When they had left the house, Mrs. Dunn proposed that they should take a turn in the Hall meadows, and they went through a little gate, not far from Mrs. Taylor's, and down a narrow footpath into the pretty fields beside the river, which was a favourite walk with the Boston people.

"Now, Jane," said Mrs. Dunn, when they had reached the broad path under the shady trees—"now, we will waste no more time. I want to ask you why you left your place at Mrs. Salter's."

"Because the young ladies were going off to school, so they only mean to keep one housemaid," replied Jane, readily.

"Was that the only reason, Jane?" said Mrs. Dunn.

"Yes, indeed it was," said Jane, bursting into tears. "I see that you, too, have heard these tales about me. I scarcely dare walk down the village, for the children seem to be pointing at me, and all the old women are making a talk about me; and now, if you believe it, I shall not have one friend left;" and Jane sobbed passionately, as if it were a relief to let her tears have vent.

"Hush, Jane," said Mrs. Dunn. "I never did believe it; and the reason I came to you to-night was, that I might hear the truth from you. I should have come before, but I did not know you had come home. You were not at church on Sunday."

"No," said Jane; "I durst not go. First thing when I came home on Friday night, Betsy Miller met me, and said, 'Ay Jane, they say all over, you've been turned away for stealing;' and then when I went to Mrs. Morton's for some tea the next morning, she was as cool as possible, and scarcely spoke to me; so I went

home, and I have scarcely ever shown my face out since."

"You have done wrong there, Jane," said Mrs. Dunn. "To neglect going to church because people were speaking evil of you unworthily, was like confessing that you were guilty, and denying your Lord and Master. Far better to have gone there and prayed that He would give you patience, and forgive your slanderers. You would find no blessing by staying at home. But I do not wish to scold you, honey; I am too sorry for you for that. So, now just let me hear exactly how you came to leave Hornby Grange."

"I will tell you just how it was," said Jane, whose tears had now stopped. "It was as good a place as any girl need have. The upper-housemaid, who is quite an elderly person, was cross with me sometimes; but you said I was to be glad if they were particular with me, so I did not mind; and it is a month ago, last Thursday, that mistress came to me and said, 'Jane, the young ladies are going off to school, and our family will then be so small that we shall not want an under-housemaid, and your master and I are going away in a month.' She gave me warning there and then, but she said very kindly to me after, 'I am sorry that I have to part with you, Jane, for I think you would have made a good servant; but you may rely upon a character from me, and I hope that you will get a good place.' "

"And was there nothing, Jane," asked Mrs. Dunn, "that could have given rise to this report?"

"Nothing at all, that I can think of," replied Jane. "I am sure I would not have taken a pin or a needle that was not my own, and it does seem hard that I should be

kept in this way from earning my bread honestly. I know of two places that I have been stopped from getting by these lies already."

"Well, be patient, Jane, and you shall be cleared," said Mrs. Dunn, kindly. "I will do my best to sift the matter to the bottom. There is a great deal too much gossip and evil speaking in this village of ours, and I am sorry that you should suffer from it. But you must not despair. Hold up your head like an honest girl; do your duty to your mother and the rest, whilst you are at home; and rest assured that your innocence will prove itself in the end."

Jane was very grateful, and they left her at her own door quite cheered up. It was not yet seven o'clock, so Mrs. Dunn considered that she had still an hour before her to devote to the clearing of Jane's character, and she sent Rachel home, and commenced her work. She began with Nanny Briggs. The old woman was very glad to see her, but it was some time before she could be made to understand what was wanted. "Jane Taylor," she repeated, "a bad lass, comes of a bad stock—like father like daughter.—Who told me so? Nay, I can't tell."

But Mrs. Dunn was patient, and waited till Nanny could remember. Surely it was widow Moss that told her. As soon as she had obtained this clue, Mrs. Dunn lost no time in going to widow Moss's cottage, which was not more than a few doors from Nanny's. She was a washerwoman, with a large family, and not ill-disposed, but gossiping and idle.

"What did you hear about Jane Taylor?" Mrs. Dunn inquired, after a few previous remarks.

“ Well, Mary Mills, when she was helping me last week, said, that Jane Taylor was taking after her father,” said Mrs. Moss, much surprised that Mrs. Dunn should be taking such an interest in a piece of gossip, “ and no wonder; but pray don’t say it was from me, for that mother of Jane’s is an awful temper, they say, and might fly out.”

“ Then you told Nanny Briggs that Jane had been turned away for stealing a piece of lace ? ” asked Mrs. Dunn.

“ No, not turned away—I didn’t say turned away,” said Mrs. Moss, rather frightened by Mrs. Dunn’s precise manner; “ but Mary Mills did say that she dare say Jane would soon be coming home; and she said it was lace, that I’ll take my davy of. But where are you off to, so quickly, Mrs. Dunn ? ”

“ To see Mary Mills,” answered the other. “ I mean to trace this story to its beginning. I feel sure that Jane is innocent, and it is most cruel of all those who have helped to take her character away.”

“ Indeed, Mrs. Dunn, if you mean me,” said Mrs. Moss, in an angry tone, “ it is not likely for a lone widow with six children to bring up, to be taking people’s character away.”

“ I don’t accuse any of you of wishing to injure Jane,” said Mrs. Dunn, gently; “ but indeed, Mrs. Moss, there is often a great deal of harm done by repeating reports against our neighbours. Whether they be true or false, it is not kind to spread them; and in telling from one to another they often grow far worse.”

“ You’ll make me out a liar next, I suppose, Mrs. Dunn,” said the widow, with an angry toss of her

head. "Thank goodness, I never set up to be better than other people."

"I am sorry if I have vexed you," said Mrs. Dunn, sincerely. "But I must not stay now, I have to go next to Mary Mills."

"You won't find her then," said Mrs. Moss, "for she is cleaning for the Linkenses."

"Thank you for telling me," said Mrs. Dunn, "it will save me a walk. Good evening."

Very soon Mrs. Dunn stopped at the private door of Mr. Linkens, who had the largest drapery and general shop in the village, and asked to speak with Mary Mills. That hard-working, honest woman soon appeared, in a great old black bonnet; and with her arms just drawn out of a pail of dirty water, and looked surprised when she saw Mrs. Dunn.

"Will you be so kind as to tell me, Mary," said that person, "exactly what you said to Widow Moss about Jane Taylor."

"About Jane Taylor," repeated Mary Mills; "she is not going to come to any harm, is she, poor Jane? She was always a favourite with me. Well, let me see. 'Mrs. Moss,' says I, 'have you heard that there has been something unpleasant about a piece of lace at Hornby Grange, that's where Jane Taylor lives, and most likely she'll have to come home.' Them was my very words, exactly."

"Thank you, Mary," said Mrs. Dunn; "and now let me ask where you heard about it?"

"It came from Miss Holmes, Esther Holmes, up at the Mill. She corresponds with the head-housemaid at the

Grange, and she would show you the letter, I dare say, if you are anxious about the matter."

"I am anxious," said Mrs. Dunn; "for this story has been spread from mouth to mouth through the village, till it is said downright that Jane is a thief, and the poor girl dare not show her face."

Esther Holmes was the miller's eldest daughter, and the mill was on a little hill just beyond the village; but Mrs. Dunn did not mind trouble when she could do any good; and she soon found herself in the miller's tidy parlour, with the decent young woman that she came to seek. The latter looked surprised when Mrs. Dunn told her errand.

"I am sure I never said anything against Jane's character," said Esther Holmes, "and I could not, because I never heard anything against it. I will show you the letter I had from my cousin this minute—I have it here in my work-box—and then you will see that it is quite the contrary."

Esther produced the letter, and, turning to the second page, Mrs. Dunn read that there was to be a change in the establishment: the under-housemaid, Jane Taylor, was going away, and the foot-boy. She was sorry to lose Jane Taylor, for she was a fine girl, and willing; "And I believe," she added, "from something that happened about a piece of lace, the other day, that she is a very honest girl, too; and I hope that she will meet with a good situation."

"I am very glad to see this," said Mrs. Dunn, as she gave back the letter. "No doubt Jane can explain the whole now; but can you tell me, Esther, how Mary Mills came to say that something unpleasant had occurred? She

had mentioned the lace too; and now it is said all over that Jane stole a piece of lace."

"I am very sorry to hear it," said Esther, really much concerned. "I cannot tell—oh, yes, I see it now,—it is most unfortunate. I read that letter aloud in the kitchen to sister Ellen the morning that I got it, and no doubt our girl, who has ears for anything, had got hold of this, and she is Mary Mills's niece. I will fetch her here."

The little hand-maiden at the mill was soon brought, and asked what she had told her aunt about Jane Taylor. She was very frightened, but they managed to make out that she had said that something had happened about a piece of lace, but what it was she did not know. Here it was made out very clearly; they only wanted Jane's own explanation now. Miss Holmes spoke very seriously to Dorothy on the evil of repeating anything she might hear in the house, but she could not scold her much, for the little girl seemed really sorry when she found that her tattling had been the means of getting Jane Taylor, who used to be so kind to her at school, into mischief; and, besides, Esther felt that she had herself been rather incautious in reading the letter aloud before the child. She begged to be allowed to go with Mrs. Dunn at once to see Jane; and the wits of all the idle part of the village were busy in trying to discover the reason of Mrs. Dunn's going to the mill at this time of night, and coming back with Esther Holmes.

No one could be more surprised than Jane Taylor was when she saw them; but her countenance brightened up when she had heard their story, and she soon told them what they wanted to know. She had never heard before

what it was that she had been accused of stealing, so she had never had an opportunity of explaining the allusion Susan had made in her letter. When she was at Hornby, she had to wait a good deal upon the young ladies, and they had often made her small presents; and, the day before they went away, Miss Emma, who had been emptying her drawers, gave Jane an apronful of pieces of ribbon, old gloves and collars, and such things. Amongst them Jane found a piece of lace, and thinking Miss Emma could not have meant to give her this, she took it back again, and Miss Emma said that it was quite a mistake. The lace had been her grandmamma's, and she would not have parted with it for the world; and she thanked Jane for bringing it back to her. Jane supposed that Miss Emma had spoken of it to Susan, and from Susan's allusions to this, and the prattling of Dorothy about what she did not half understand, all the mischief had arisen.

"Well, Jane, I wish you joy," said Mrs. Dunn, taking hold of her hand; "you are certainly cleared now; and I shall take care that everybody knows it, and Mrs. Fothergill among the rest."

"Nay, I think," said Esther Holmes, "that we should take Jane round with us, and make all these ill-natured gossips beg her pardon."

"Oh, no," cried Jane. "It is very kind of you, but please do not say anything about their begging my pardon. I know they did not mean to injure me, and I am quite content if they are told that the story was not true. If I had not shut myself up as I did, perhaps the story might not have gone so far; but I can never thank you and Mrs. Dunn enough for your kindness in making it all out for me, only I shall never forget it."

“ Say no more about that, Jane,” said Mrs. Dunn. “ For my part, I am truly glad that we have got you cleared, and I am quite repaid by finding that you are what I always hoped you would be. But do not forget, my dear, to return your thanks where they are justly due, and to pray also that, amidst all temptations, you may be able to persevere in an upright course of life. And now, good night; my little Rachel will be looking for me, and we have something more still to do.”

And, so saying, the two kind neighbours turned their steps towards home; but they did not forget to call on all those they knew to be concerned in the affair; and it was curious to see the different ways in which they each received the news. Mary Mills had come home from Mr. Linkens’s, and when they told her, she said, —

“ I will give it to that niece of mine, the first time I see her; I’ll teach her to come to me with such stories.”

But Mrs. Dunn said, good-humouredly, “ Nay, nay, Mrs. Mills, her mistress herself has scolded Dorothy enough; and you know, Mary, excuse my saying so, if it had stopped here, there would have been no harm done.”

“ Well,” said Mary, who was by no means an ill-disposed person, “ you’re right there, and it is not many would have taken the trouble that you have to make it out, but I am sure I didn’t mean to do any harm, and I am glad that Jane is cleared, poor lass.”

The widow Moss, did not see the matter in that light at all. She would scarcely hear their tale. Did they want to make her out a liar, she said; and finding they

could do no good with her, they went on to Nanny's. The old woman was getting ready to go to bed, and she did not approve of being disturbed.

"What are you making such a fuss for?" she grumbled. "If Jane Taylor is a thief, she is one; and if she is honest, she'll be the first of her family. Well, well; it may be so."

And Mrs. Dunn only waited to help old Nanny into bed, and then she bid Esther Holmes good night, thanking her for her help, and went on alone to Betsy Miller's. To this thoughtless, mischievous girl, Mrs. Dunn spoke very seriously, showing her the cruel way in which her slanders might have destroyed Jane's prospects, and that even now, the shadow of this story would very likely remain as a reproach upon Jane, long after the true version was forgotten—so much readier are people in general to believe evil than good of their neighbours; and Mrs. Dunn desired Betsy, as she valued truth and kindness, to go as soon as possible to any one to whom she had told the story, and to contradict it; and she begged her for the future to have more regard to that charity, which not only forbids malicious slanders, but would have us even think "no evil" of our neighbours.

Her words did not seem to have much effect on Betsy. She only muttered that she had not made it up, she told it as it had been told to her; but, in a sulky way, she agreed to go next day and contradict it; and then Mrs. Dunn went home to rejoice Rachel with the good news; and as it happened, a footboy came down just afterwards with an order for Stephen from his master, and she was able by him to send a message to

Mrs. Fothergill without loss of time. And the next morning, when the miller went to the Hall with some flour, Esther Holmes took care to send by him the letter praising Jane ; and as Mrs. Fothergill had fortunately not yet met with an under-housemaid, she wrote to Mrs. Salter for Jane's character, and obtaining a very good one, she at once took Jane into the desired situation at the Hall, where she showed her gratitude to her kind and active friends by taking every pains to fulfil her duties willingly and well.

But it was more than a week or a fortnight before Jane's affairs were so comfortably settled. And in the meantime the young heiress had taken a fancy which greatly influenced Rachel's future life. Rachel had been once more up to the Hall, because Miss Sinclair was still a prisoner with her cold, and she had enjoyed the visit very much, and had been allowed to bring home with her the pretty story-book that she had begun to read the other day. But a short time after this, when Rachel was at school, her mother was much surprised to see the beautiful pony-carriage drive up to her door, and Miss Sinclair herself get out of it. She went out immediately to receive the young lady, who spoke to her in her usual free, unabashed manner, and said ;—

“I know who you are ; you lived with poor mamma, so I am sure you will not refuse what I have come to ask. I want little Rachel to come and live with me, then she will be always ready to play with me, and when I am grown up, she shall be my maid, and I will give her half my play-things, and she shall always be dressed far better than Elton is.”

Mrs. Dunn smiled at the arguments that the pretty child—for she was only a child, after all—thought so overpowering, and she said, kindly, “Thank you, my dear young lady. It is not many things that you could ask me in the name of your sweet mamma, that I could bear to refuse; but I could not give you my Rachel. Neither her father nor I could bear to part with her. She is our only child, and she is a great comfort to us.”

“But you would see her often,” said Miss Sinclair, looking very much crest-fallen at this unexpected opposition. “And Mrs. Meadows should teach her; that would be much better than the village-school for her, and Fothergill should take care of her. Come, Sarah—I know poor mamma used to call you Sarah—let me have Rachel.”

“You are very kind, Miss Emmeline,” said Mrs. Dunn, “but there are many good reasons against it, even if we could bear to send Rachel away from us; but I will not trouble you with them. Only you must not, please, set your heart upon having Rachel, for indeed she cannot come to live at the Hall.”

“Then, I shall speak to papa about it,” said the young lady, in a pet; and turning away without another word, she walked with a grand air to the pony-carriage, where her governess was waiting for her.

“How like her poor mother she is,” said Mrs. Dunn, as she saw her gather up the white reins in her little well-gloved hands, and with a word to the docile ponies, drive away. “Only with a different spirit. Poor thing, I fear she is not being trained up in the right way. At any rate, I should not like our Rachel to be made a slave to the little lady’s humours;” and when Rachel

came from school, Mrs. Dunn said nothing to her about Miss Sinclair's visit. But the matter did not end here. The young lady was true to her word, and teased her papa until he went himself to his gardener, and offered to adopt Rachel. He promised that she should be well taken care of in every respect, and when old enough, she should become his daughter's personal attendant. This offer was not unexpected; Stephen had talked it over with his wife, and was prepared with his answer.

"We are very much obliged to you, sir," he said—"I know I may speak in my wife's name as well as in my own—for thinking our child worthy to be brought up with the young lady; but I don't think, sir, we can part with her. She is our only one, and is very dear to us; and besides this, if Rachel was to be brought up with Miss Sinclair, she would get accustomed to luxuries that she could never have again, and she would be sure to get ideas above her parents and her station. No, sir, thank you; as long as we can we will keep Rachel under our own eye, and I hope, sir, you will not be offended at me for saying so."

"No, no, Stephen," said Mr. Sinclair. "I ought to be the last to find fault with any one for being fond of their only daughter, but I think, my good friend, that you should consider a little before you throw away the advantages I offer to your child. She would be my daughter's confidential maid, and you might consider her provided for."

"Thank you, sir," said Stephen; "I hope I am not acting selfishly. We would give up a deal for Rachel's good. But I think, sir, we can't give her up, thank you."

Mr. Sinclair, though he was annoyed that he could not gratify this strong fancy of his child, was yet too generous to press the subject on his dependent. But when Miss Emmeline knew that he had failed, she was very angry, and declared that she hated Rachel now, and would never speak to her any more; and Mrs. Fothergill repeated this to Rachel's parents, and reproached them for refusing such a prospect for the child. Mrs. Dunn did not repent her decision. For Rachel's sake, she rejoiced that she had been able to keep her out of what might have been to her a life of temptation; but for the sake of Miss Emmeline, she could have almost been sorry, for she saw that the little daughter of her dearly-loved mistress was in a fair way to be quite spoiled. With a father doting upon her, and a governess following his example, with servants and every luxury at her command, and yet no one to teach her self-denial and active goodness, Mrs. Dunn felt sincere pity for the young heiress; and she thought to herself, "Surely, if Miss Emmeline had seen our little Rachel showing forth her simple faith in every child-like act, she must have been led to seek after these things herself, and perchance might have found them;" and for this reason alone, she regretted the separation that had taken place between the Hall and their humble cottage.

CHAPTER IV.

“O lost and found ! all gentle souls below
Their dearest welcome shall prepare, and prove
Such joy o’er thee as raptured seraphs know,
Who learn their lesson at the Throne of Love.”

KEBLE.

BUT she had not to regret it long. Miss Emmeline soon got over her pet, and in less than a week she had begun to pine again for the droll Rachel, and neither toys nor books, nor the promise of companions in the little ladies at the country-houses near, would satisfy Miss Emmeline. She wanted her Rachel, and Rachel she would have. It was her maid Elton who first found a remedy for this dilemma. “Couldn’t you have the little girl up of an afternoon to run about the park with you, miss?—or she might sit here with you when it is wet. She’d like it far better than going to school, and it would be just the same to her mother.”

Emmeline was charmed with the idea; she lost no time in sending Fothergill down to the cottage, and a compromise was arranged that very day.

Instead of going to school, Rachel was to spend every afternoon at the Hall; and to compensate for anything she might lose, Mrs. Meadows promised to give her some instruction; and she was to return every day in time for

her parents' tea. Rachel had lost nothing of her admiration for Miss Emmeline, and the prospect of spending so much time with her could not but be pleasant to her. But there was one great drawback. As soon as the girls at the school found out where Rachel Dunn went to every afternoon, the greatest envy began to be excited against her. Ellen Smith, and a party who always followed her lead, set themselves to tease Rachel as soon as she appeared amongst them, and every morning was a trial to her patience. They used to call her "My lady;" they would pull at her pretty cottons, and ask her why she had not a silk dress on; and if she wanted to play with them on the green, they would cry out, "No, no, we are not good enough for you now." And this was painful to little Rachel, so gentle and so loving, who would not have injured one of them, and who wished to be friends with everybody; no wonder that she looked sometimes very sad. When her mother found out what was the matter, she only said, "Never mind, Rachel; it is quite natural that they should tease you a little at first, but be patient, and they will soon be tired; only mind that you are kind to them all, and take care that going to the Hall does not make you look down upon them."

And Rachel was patient; but one day Ellen Smith was so rude to her, that she cried to herself as she came home, and her eyes were still red when she went up to the Hall. That afternoon it was very fine and warm, and Emmeline had persuaded Mrs. Meadows to let her have a table and some chairs put out upon the lawn under a large beech-tree, near to a sweet bed of heliotrope, that she might do her lessons in the open air;

and lest Rachel might not see them there, she ran out into the shrubbery to meet her, and soon saw that Rachel had been in trouble.

"What is the matter, little Rachel?"—she always called her little Rachel, though in fact she was not much bigger herself. "Has that cross schoolmistress, with her long sharp-edged nose, been scolding you? I can turn her away, if she does, remember; or at least papa can, so she had better not treat you badly."

"No; she is very kind," said Ruth, smiling,

"What is it, then?" said Miss Emmeline; and though Rachel did not want to tell, it was not very long before the young lady made out that the girls teased her because she came to the Hall; and that this morning, when they came out of school, Fanny Gill had snatched her bonnet off—it was her oldest one—and had set it upon a long stick, and gone about the green with it ever so far down, singing out, "Here is a fine bonnet for the finest lady in Boston," till Mary Mills had seen her, and given her a slap, and then made her give Rachel back her bonnet.

"The rude creatures!" cried Miss Emmeline. "I will order the pony-carriage directly, and go down to the school, and tell the schoolmistress to punish them all. What shall we do to them, Rachel? Something very horrid!"

"Oh no, please, Miss Sinclair," said Rachel, in alarm. "I wish I had not told you. It was very unkind of me to tell you."

"You silly goose," said Miss Emmeline. "Why, you could not help it. I made you tell. But you shall see how much they shall be punished."

"Oh no, please don't!" cried Rachel, now with tears in her eyes.

"What, don't you want them to be punished?" asked Miss Emmeline, in surprise.

"No," answered Rachel; "mother said it was only natural at first, because they do not understand, and they will think I am sure to be a fine lady, because I come here. I am to show them in time that it does not make me proud, and I am to be kind to them, and then they will not tease me. I heard Ellen Smith saying, that she would like a sampler with Adam and Eve on to copy, so mother is going to get me out one that aunt Rachel left me, and I am going to lend it to Ellen, and then she will know that I love her still."

"Well, you are the drollest little thing I ever saw," said Miss Emmeline, and truly here was a glimpse of something that the little lady could not understand. And thus it was, as Rachel's mother had looked forward to, that as Rachel was learning from Mrs. Meadows the finer parts of needlework, and many other things that she could never have learnt at the village school, she was in return, quite unconsciously, teaching Miss Emmeline far better things.

The sympathy which, in spite of the difference in their stations, had made them have a liking for each other from the first, increased every day; until at length no plan of Miss Emmeline's was perfect unless approved by Rachel, while every part of Rachel's little busy life had to be listened to by Miss Emmeline. And Miss Emmeline no longer made game of Rachel, as she called it, and she had begun to respect her humble friend, because Rachel was consistent — not good only when it was

pleasant, and she felt happy and cheerful, and there was nothing to put her out—but trying to be good always. And, the reason was—as Jenny Brown had said, when she laid her hand on Rachel's shoulder, that night when she first saw Miss Emmeline—because she had been called to great honour, to the honour of being a Christian, and she knew that, by God's help, she must show her love and thankfulness by trying to live like one. She was but a child, and a little simple child, and yet she acted on this principle, love to God and love to man, and the guiding motive became stronger with her growing years.

When the spring came round again, and Rachel was, as she would have said, "going on twelve," or as Miss Emmeline would have corrected her with, "nearly twelve years old," her father and mother thought her so much improved by the kind pains that Mrs. Meadows was taking with her, that they need not be at the expense of sending her to school again. Besides this, her mother thought that she would have more time for learning to work about more in the house, for she had not yet quite lost her fear of Rachel's being made too fine a lady.

So Rachel left the week-day school, much to the regret of her companions, who had been at last won over by her patience; but she still went, of course, on Sundays, with her collect and her hymn, and verse of Scripture correctly learnt to say to her beloved teacher, kind Miss Emily, from the rectory; and afterwards to her old place at church, where she could almost feel the rustle of Miss Sinclair's dress as she went past, and she knew

that there would be an answering smile if she looked up ; but she never did look up, not even when she knew Miss Emmeline would say next day, " Why would you not smile at me at church, little Rachel ? "

And thus the winter months had passed away. Every afternoon saw Rachel trotting through the shrubbery, wrapped up in the brown cloth cloak, if it was wet, with the hood drawn closely over her old bonnet. Then leaving these in her godmother's room with her heavy shoes, she would put on dry slippers, and trip lightly up stairs, to the warm, comfortable room where Miss Emmeline and the lessons were waiting for her. One conversation between them will give you some idea of how they each spent the intermediate time.

" Now, little Rachel," said Miss Emmeline, " come close to the fire and warm your toes, and I will give you a screen, too, although you say that your mother is not afraid of your spoiling your complexion. Mrs. Meadows will not be here for a quarter of an hour, I dare say, to *learn* us our lessons, as you used to say, so now tell me all you have been doing since yesterday afternoon, and then I will tell you a splendid idea that has come into my own head. Now everything, little Rachel. But remember, I do know the pattern on your tea-tray, so you need not tell me that again ; but every thing else, and then I can fancy I am living in a cottage with you."

" Well, let me see," said Rachel ; " I stroked pussy first, I think."

" Of course," said Miss Emmeline, laughing ; " I do believe that you are as fond of your grey kitten as I am of my Gipsy. No, Gip, that cannot be, can it, my beauty ?"—and Miss Emmeline bent her yellow curls

over the little black spaniel that lay in her lap, and kissed its glossy head. "Well, go on, Rachel."

"Oh, then," said Rachel, considering,—“I made mother sit down in the great chair to rest herself—for she had been mangling when I was out—and then I began to get tea ready; and whilst I was putting the cups so that they did not fall into the river that I told you was painted on our tea-tray, Ellen Flower came in to say that John Simmons was getting worse—you know, Miss Emmeline, I told you about him being forced to come home, he was so ill, and they think he is dying now—and he was worse, so they wanted mother to go in a bit, because his mother was so weary, and the baby would not go to sleep except she was with it. Mother said she would go in as soon as ever tea was over, and then father came in, and when we had done tea, mother asked him if he would mind her staying all night with the poor Simmonses? and father said ‘No, if she did not get knocked up with it,’ and he went with her himself; and while he was out, I sided up.”

“Stop, Rachel, stop!” cried Miss Emmeline; “what is siding up?”

“Oh, putting things in their places, and washing the tea-things, and sweeping the hearth, and setting father’s chair ready, and the little table to sort the seeds on, and that kind of thing.”

“Oh,” replied Miss Emmeline. “Go on, Rachel.”

“Well, then, father came back again, and he was very glad he had been, for they wanted somebody with strong arms to help to turn poor John. Then, while father got to his seeds, I learnt my lessons, and father heard me them; and do you know, Miss Emmeline, there was one

piece so hard, that I thought I never could get it off. It was in 'Questions and Answers,' about how a steam-engine is made."

"Oh, I know it," said Miss Emmeline,—“I learnt that last year, before we came to Boston; and I remember when I came to that answer, I could not learn it, so I threw the book away to the other end of the room,—that is what makes it look so shabby; and Mrs. Meadows said she would tell papa,—I don't think she did though; but he just came into my schoolroom then, to take me out with him, and he was rather angry with me. You don't know how papa looks when he is angry with me, Rachel; not red, you know, like the dairymaid when Gipsy jumped into the cream-bowl—do you remember, Rachel?—but papa looked grieved; and he said something about my wanting poor mamma, and I did wish I had not thrown the book down. I wish I was good, Rachel; I don't think I am,” said Miss Emmeline, with the tears standing in her deep blue eyes.

“Nobody is good at first,” said Rachel, putting her hand lovingly on Miss Emmeline's, “but they have to try always.”

“Oh, but I was telling you about the steam-engine,” said Miss Emmeline, who had been serious quite long enough for her, “so papa sent for a beautiful little model of a steam-engine from Edinburgh, and then he showed me all about it.”

“And father did nearly the same,” said Rachel. “He scolded me a little because I said it was so hard, for he says I ought to be very thankful for Mrs. Meadows being so kind as to teach me, and then he explained it to me; for when he was a young man, he used to live close to where

there was an engine working coal-waggon, and he knew the man that took care of it; and then he told me all about how James Watt first found what the steam of hot water could do, and then I could learn it quite easy; and after that I read to father out of the book that you lent me, and father said that you had given us a deal of pleasure. And then I got father's worsted stockings, and I mended them all, and mother was so surprised when she came in—as she had promised she would—to supper, but she was more surprised when she saw what I had got ready for supper. I had fried a bit of bacon, and some eggs that our hens laid this week; and father told me how he used to have to cook for himself once, when he lived beside the steam-engine, and he lifted me down the frying-pan."

"And what time was that?" said Miss Emmeline.

"About half-past eight, I think," said Rachel.

"Then, that was just the time when I was telling papa that I was sure you would be as busy as a bee; and I was sitting on that little ottoman in the drawing-room that you liked so much, you know, Rachel, with the roses on it; and I was nursing Gipsy, and papa, who was close to me on the sofa, said that I was the idle drone, and then he stroked my hair, and I told him that he loved his idle drone better than anybody's busy bee. And do you know, I had such a disappointment last night; that stupid dressmaker at Boston, that was making me my pretty grey jacket to wear to-day when I went to call on Mrs. Neville, never sent it home; but I shall never let her work for me again—I sent to tell her so this morning."

"Perhaps she could not help it," said Rachel;

“mother says she is very industrious, but she is not strong.”

“She might have sent me my jacket, though; but go on, Rachel—when you had finished supper, you know.”

“Then we had our reading and prayers, and father put in about for whom our prayers are desired, because John Simmons had asked mother to pray for him. Mother says he was not always a good boy. He used to play on Sundays instead of going to church, and he was rough and rude, and said bad words, and he thinks of it often now, and it hurts him more than the pain he has; but Mr. Merton reads to him, and then he feels comforted, because he knows that the Lord Jesus will save him. Then he is not afraid to die, only he would like to live a little longer, that he might be a better boy, and help his mother.

Miss Emmeline looked very thoughtful as Rachel said this in her serious way, as if she so well understood what she was saying, and the young lady said to herself,—“I have not been good, and if I were going to die, I should not know that the Lord Jesus would save me;” and then she thought,—“The next time I go to church, I will not be thinking about Gipsy and the ponies, but I will attend to my prayers, as Mrs. Meadows once said I ought to do, and I will listen to Mr. Merton, and try to find out about the things that make Rachel so good and happy.”

It was God’s Holy Spirit that was putting these good desires in Miss Emmeline’s heart, as we pray in the second collect for the evening prayers He may do; and when these holy thoughts came back to her, she did not drive them away again, but cherished them, and by God’s

grace she was enabled to bring them to good effect. But now Miss Emmeline spoke again. "Then this morning, Rachel; how was the poor boy this morning, and what did you do after that?"

"Oh! this morning," answered Rachel, "poor John was much the same, and it was our ironing-day; so, whilst mother lay down to rest awhile, I got the irons heated, and the clothes laid ready, and we have been hard at work all the morning; and mother says she thinks I improve; but she takes such pains with me, I can't but learn. And that is all, Miss Emmeline; so, please, now tell me what you are going to do?"

"Do you remember, Rachel," said Miss Emmeline, "my telling you, after I had been at Ellonby last Christmas, about the charming aviary that Lady Alice Penryn has? Well, I want to have one like it. Now, don't stare, Rachel; I asked papa about it last night, and he did not say, no; he only laughed, and said I had been building a castle in the air. Oh! Rachel, it would be delightful. Only fancy, it should open out of the conservatory. We should be able to walk out of the drawing-room, through the flowers, into a beautiful place full of pretty birds fluttering and singing round us. Don't you think it would be delightful, little Rachel?"

"Yes," said Rachel, rather doubtfully. "Only I think I had rather hear the birds singing joyfully among the trees. If they were shut up in an aviary, I should think they were prisoners screaming to be set free."

"Oh! how stupid, Rachel. I thought you would like it so much. Then what do you say to old Nelly's cottage being pulled down to make room for it?"

"Old Nelly's cottage!" cried Rachel. "Oh! Miss

Emmeline, you would surely never think of turning poor Nelly out? It would kill her."

"There, I knew you would say that, Rachel," answered Miss Emmeline, quite annoyed. "You are so fond of dirty old women. Old Nelly should, of course, be put into some nice place; and she is so foolish that she would not know the difference."

The entrance of Mrs. Meadows put an end to the discussion, and it was not renewed until the close of the afternoon, when, as it had got out fine, her governess told Miss Emmeline that she might have her strong shoes put on, and walk through the more open part of the shrubbery with Rachel, and she would follow and overtake them presently. It had been a showery afternoon, but a warm April sun was shining brightly through the drops of rain that still hung upon the budding branches; and, as if to welcome its returning beams, a multitude of birds were filling the air with harmony.

"Listen, Miss Emmeline," said Rachel, "there is a thrush; I know its note well. Does not its voice ring with gladness? It seems to me as if the birds could speak the thankfulness that we feel when spring comes back again. Oh! Miss Emmeline, how can you want a house for birds, when every tree here is full of them, and you can come out into the sweet, fresh air, and hear them at any time?"

"I can't think, Rachel," said Miss Emmeline, "why you don't like my having an aviary."

"Because I like the birds to be happy best," said Rachel; "and, besides, I am thinking of poor Nelly. Mother says that she cannot live more than a year or two, and it would very soon kill her now if she were moved.

It does kill old people. I know when Bridget Allen had to go and live with her son she died in ten days after; and when Mr. Lamb talked of pulling down those old houses on the green, Nanny Briggs did nothing but moan all day, and mother says that the very thoughts of being moved have shortened her days. Oh, Miss Emmeline, it would just be cruel," added Rachel, warmly; "you would never do it."

"I think you are very cross, Rachel," said Miss Emmeline in a pet; "you know I shall not like my aviary if you talk that way, and I think it is very unkind of you."

Rachel did think she had been rather cross; and the next day, although she had not changed her opinion, she said she hoped her dear Miss Emmeline would not mind her speaking so freely; but, to her great joy, she found that Miss Emmeline had given up the idea. It is probable that her papa would never have given his consent to a plan which, however it might please his darling, would have involved the turning out a faithful old servant who had, ever since she was too old to work, had a home beside the stables; but Emmeline did not propose it again. With one brave purpose she put aside the scheme which Rachel had said was cruel, and which her own heart had told her was only for her own selfish amusement; and with renewed friendship the two girls returned to their employments.

The reason that Miss Emmeline had reproached Rachel with liking all the dirty old women, as she called them in her pet, was, that Rachel had talked a great deal lately about Betty Eppeby, the cross old woman at the alms-houses. The next time that Rachel's mother had gone to see Betty, the old woman had said, "Why has not the child

come with you?" and before she left, she said again, "What do you call her—Rachel? Ay; why doesn't Rachel come, is she frightened of me?"

And Mrs. Dunn, thinking that Rachel might be a comfort to the old woman, as she seemed to have taken a fancy to her, had sent her; and Betty had even smiled to see her, and had let her nurse the cat, and had given her a rose to take away with her. Rachel wondered how she could ever have been afraid of her, and she went again; and by degrees her visit to the almshouses became a regular thing. She often went into the cottages of the other women, particularly that of Jenny Brown, but into Betty's most, for she seemed the most desolate; and sometimes she talked to her, and sometimes she read her a chapter, as the old woman called it; and while the Blessed Word softened her time-hardened heart, she loved the child who brought peace to her, and little Rachel's visits were among the brightest spots in the old woman's life.

About the middle of this bright summer, Rachel's intercourse with the Hall was stopped for a few days. The Lady Alice Penryn, who had the aviary, and her cousin, Miss Laura Penryn, came to spend a short time at the Hall; and Rachel's mother would not allow her to intrude whilst Miss Emmeline had these companions. Miss Emmeline, however, would not be prevented for so long from seeing Rachel; and one fine afternoon she brought her gaily-dressed companions through the shrubbery to the gardener's cottage, and introduced to them the dearest little creature in the world, as she called Rachel. Lady Alice looked rather scornfully upon Miss Emmeline's rustic friend; but Miss Penryn, who was some

years older, spoke very kindly to Rachel, and asked her many questions about the village and the school, which Rachel answered with modest propriety.

When her young lady visitors had gone, Rachel put on her bonnet to go with a message, which her mother had desired her to take to Betsy Miller. During the last few months, Betsy had so much improved that Mrs. Dunn had noticed her a good deal; and now, hearing that Mrs. Carter, the farmer's wife, wanted a stout girl to help them during the busy harvest-time, and would give good wages, she sent Rachel down to say, that if Betsy had a mind to earn some money, she had no doubt but she could get her the place.

Betsy willingly consented; and as Rachel was hastening back again, she said, "Have you heard how Miss Sanderson is this afternoon?"

"No," said Rachel, "we did not know that she was ill."

"She is ill enough," said Betsy. "They say she was found quite senseless late on Saturday night, with one of Miss Sinclair's fine dresses laid beside her. She's killed herself with being overpressed by the young lady, people say."

Rachel was very much shocked; but she durst not deny the charge, for she knew that Miss Emmeline had told her that her papa had brought her a pretty pink silk dress, and a white muslin one,—and she had sent them on Thursday to be finished by Saturday, when she expected her young visitors. She hurried home to her mother with tears in her eyes; but her mother said, "Poor, dear young lady, it is far more the fault of those who let her do such thoughtless things;" and then, with-

out a moment's delay, she went off to see the poor young dressmaker. She was the same who had offended Miss Emmeline last year, by not finishing her jacket in time. She was a most industrious, good young woman; and by her labours entirely supported her aged aunt, who was her only relative. When these dresses came in to be done, with all their flounces and trimmings, in so short a time, Miss Sanderson was far from well; but unwilling to lose the custom of the Hall, she stitched and stitched, when her fingers and her eyes seemed failing her, until at last her strength gave way as Betsy Miller described, and Mrs. Dunn found her in a state of great exhaustion.

When Rachel heard her mother's account, she was all anxiety for the next afternoon, when the ladies would have left, and she might go again to the Hall. Judging by herself, she thought Miss Emmeline would be grateful for the opportunity of making up for her past negligence. It might not have been the case a little while ago; but the good example of her cousin, Miss Penryn, had strengthened the previous impressions that she had received; and Miss Emmeline said at once, "I must go and see the poor creature, Rachel; it was so cruel of me to make her finish my dresses,—I shall never forgive myself."

And when Mrs. Meadows had ascertained that there was no infection in the case, she took her pupil to the house where Miss Sanderson and her aunt occupied the two upper rooms. This was the first time that Emmeline had been near to poverty and sickness, and she was astonished at the wretchedness she saw.

"I am very sorry," she said, coming near to the bed where the sick girl lay, "I am very sorry I made you ill

with hurrying you so much." And when, at the sound of the strange, soft voice, Miss Sanderson opened her eyes, the sight of the sweet-looking young lady from the Hall was quite a cordial to her.

And Miss Emmeline's sympathies, once aroused, did not stop here. A good doctor was procured, and many comforts sent down daily from the Hall; and when sea-air was recommended, she prevailed upon her papa to allow her to employ the money that was to have bought her a new riding hat and habit, in sending Miss Sanderson to the sea.

And this was not all. Miss Emmeline had now tasted the pure pleasure of which Rachel drank so freely—the pleasure of doing good; and from this time she ceased to live for her own selfish gratification; and, feeling that she was born for higher and more glorious purposes, her young heart expanded joyfully in thankfulness and love.

CHAPTER V.

“Who are those array’d in light,
 Clothed in righteousness divine,
 Wearing robes most pure and white,
 That unstain’d shall ever shine?
 Hallelujahs, hark, they sing,
 Solemn praise to God they bring.”
 LYRA GERMANICA.

AND now if Rachel’s father had said, “And how do you like the young lady?” Rachel would have been puzzled how to frame her answer heartily enough—for she loved Miss Emmeline dearly. And there were few who did not share her feeling. As the young lady drove her ponies through the village now, the children used to smile and courtesy, and many a blessing followed her. And very pretty she looked, with the wind gently waving her long golden curls, and slightly flushing her transparent cheeks—but prettier still from the sweet, holy expression that sat so calmly on her face. “She is like an angel,” the old women said, and shook their heads, for many of them thought she shared her mother’s delicacy.

And it was true; Miss Emmeline was not strong, and by the time she had attained her sixteenth year, she was often so nearly an invalid, that she looked almost with envy on Rachel’s free and active movements and her glow of perfect health. Still there was nothing to alarm even her anxious father, until one unlucky day in

July, when she was overtaken by a heavy thunderstorm, and could not reach a place of shelter, until she was wetted to the skin. What might scarcely have affected Rachel at all, was to the fragile Emmeline of serious moment. What was at first a severe cold, ended in an alarming illness, and by the end of August the doctors said the only chance of saving her was to take her for the winter to the south of Europe. Miss Emmeline herself agreed to everything with a sweet composure, but to Rachel it was a hard trial, and it required all her fortitude to bear up against it. But her mother was very kind, and spared her to go a great deal to the Hall, turning her handy fingers to many a useful purpose; now helping her godmother, who was to go with Miss Emmeline, in her many packings and arrangements; now doing a bit of sewing for Elton; but more frequently sitting beside her dear young lady, receiving her directions about what was to be done, whilst she was away, amongst the people she had learned to love so much; or listening to her promises of all she should have to tell Rachel on her return about the bright blue skies, the vineyards, and the strange manners of the sunny south, that they had often read about together; but Miss Emmeline always added gently, "If it please God, that I come back again."

So busy had Rachel made herself, that she had scarcely had time to think how much she was going to lose, until the day of parting came; but it all rushed upon her, as she stood on the Hall steps to see the carriage drive away; and when she had answered the last beaming smile of that beautiful fair face, she turned away, and going into

the shrubby walk, so full of recollections, she sat down upon a bank, that was thickly strewn with falling leaves, to sob and pray.

It was perhaps well for Rachel that, when she returned home that afternoon, there was a person there who was certainly calculated to change the current of her thoughts. This was an aunt she scarcely knew, a sister of her father's; she had lost her husband lately, and, having no children, desired to take a situation as house-keeper, or something of that sort, and meanwhile had proposed to come and visit her brother Stephen and his wife. As she had a little money of her own, and did not mean to be a burden to them; and as she was of rather an unamiable turn, she thought herself at liberty to be as uncivil, or, at least, as plain-spoken (as she probably would have called it) as she liked. And this right she exercised on the very first evening, making them all feel that they had got a person of a spirit different to their own amongst them.

After the first bustle of her aunt's arrival was over, her boxes had been put out of the way, she had been settled, and they had had their tea, they all sat down quietly round the fire. Stephen was out, he had business with Mr. Lamb, but his chair was ready for him, and near it was one placed for the stranger. Mrs. Dunn took her knitting, that she might be ready to amuse her sister-in-law; and Rachel sat between them, that the light of the candle upon the table might fall upon her sewing. Little Rachel she could be called no longer—she was nearly fifteen years old, and had sprung up into a tall comely-looking girl, with dark wavy hair, and bright eyes, and a sweet look about her mouth. But though

sweet and patient, to-night it was very sad; and perhaps this made more apparent the kind of refinement in her air, which, with the delicate neatness of her plain dress, she had partly acquired by association with Miss Emmeline. Perhaps it was this that irritated her aunt,—at any rate, she was very cross, as she said—

“Ay, ay, I thought how it would be, when I first heard of your letting Rachel hang about the Hall so much. It might do for a bit, but these fine ladies are whimsical; and, you see, she’s no sooner up in life than off she goes, and cares nothing about Rachel moping here.”

“Miss Emmeline would not have gone if the doctors had not ordered it, aunt,” said Rachel, flushing up a little, not for herself, but for her young lady’s sake.

“I am glad to see that you have some spirit left yet,” said her aunt, tauntingly; and once upon this cue, she did not leave it, but launched out upon the dangers to young girls of having their heads full of fine notions, till they didn’t know their own place, and were above turning their hands to anything useful. Rachel did not speak again; she was reproaching herself with having spoken so warmly, for as she said to herself, “Aunt Catherine does not know Miss Emmeline, and as mother has often told me, she was as much against my going to the Hall as anybody.”

But her mother could not sit to hear her Rachel talked at in this way; and she said; “Nay, Catherine, you must not think that Rachel is above her station till you have seen her wash, and get up her father’s Sunday shirt, or make his shoes as bright as a looking-glass. She is my right hand, I can assure you; and I tell her, she will

make an idle old woman of me. But Miss Emmeline has been like a sister to her, and we must not wonder at her fretting a little after her to-night ; I am sure there is a sore place in my heart, when I think of the sweet, motherless young lady gone so far away." And then Mrs. Dunn changed the subject, and talked cheerfully to take aunt Catherine's attention away from the tears that would drop upon Rachel's stitching, both from her mother's kindness and the remembrance of Miss Emmeline. But the tears did not drop long, before Rachel roused herself, and thought, "It looks indeed as if I was spoilt, to be fretting this way, when I have so many blessings left, and so much work to do in the world. I should be grateful to mother for letting me be so much lately with Miss Emmeline, and for the future I must do far more to help her and please her than I have done ; and, above all, I should be thankful to God, that whatever happens to dear Miss Emmeline—whether she should live or die—I can be at peace about her, and know that she is happy."

And Rachel acted on these thoughts, and soon the colour came back to her cheeks, and the smile to her lips, and her merry laugh was heard again. There was plenty for her to do, both in the house and out of it. Her aunt Catherine seemed never tired of making work for her : this would have been only a pleasure to Rachel, had her aunt been satisfied when it was done ; but she was always grumbling ; and, for the first time, the sound of discord was heard in the house. Stephen used to quarrel with his sister sometimes about Rachel, sometimes about other subjects ; and it used to be one of Rachel's chief cares during the evening to prevent herself from giving any offence to her aunt, and thus cause a renewal of these

jars: for Rachel was a peace-maker. Amongst her young companions this was well known, and "We will ask Rachel Dunn," was the issue of many a dispute; for Rachel had a sweet and happy way of settling the question, and soothing both the disputants. The slanderous word or gossiping report was also checked in the presence of Rachel. Her grave, gentle, "It is not kind, you know," had stopped many an idle tale, and saved a neighbour's character.

Do not think it impossible, dear children, for a young girl like Rachel to acquire this holy influence. It was but the light within which shone around, and drove all dark and evil words and deeds away!

They often heard during the winter from Mrs. Fothergill, for Miss Emmeline was not allowed to write herself; but she spoke cheerfully of her young lady on the whole, and she said that they had met at Florence with a very kind lady, a relation of Miss Emmeline's own mother, who was going to stay all the winter with them, and would be nice society for Miss Emmeline; and there were always sweet messages from her to Rachel in the letters. But one day, towards the spring, they were surprised to see a letter from Mr. Sinclair himself. Stephen supposed it would only be something about removing some young firs, or altering the flower-beds, as had been talked of; but as he read, his countenance fell, and he could scarcely tell his wife the news. Mr. Sinclair wrote kindly, but said that his daughter's health was improved; but the doctors said that she would never be able to live in the north again: he therefore intended to break up his establishment here, and live upon a smaller estate he had

in Hampshire ; and he advised Stephen to be looking out for another situation, although the change would not take place for six months, at least ; and he finished by assuring Stephen that his long and faithful services should command his strongest recommendation.

Here was a blow for Rachel—far beyond anything her fears had ever pointed to. That they should have to leave Boston, they who seemed as much a part of the village as the walnut-trees that shaded it, seemed incredible. To leave Boston, where she knew everybody, where every house contained a friend, the church where she had gone every Sunday but three—yes, she could count the Sundays that she had been absent. To leave their own home, Rachel could not believe it ; at any rate, she could not be happy anywhere else.

“ My dear Rachel,” said her mother, when her aunt Catherine had scolded her fill about the nonsense that so much learning had put into the girl’s head ; “ My dear child, it will be a great grief to us all to leave our dear old home ; but we know that if we have to go, it is God’s will, and must be for some loving purpose, and we ought not to repine at it. We can be happy anywhere, if we know that we are doing our duty, and that God’s blessing for our Lord’s sake is upon us.”

So Rachel waited patiently, and tried to accustom herself to the idea of leaving Boston, though it still hung like a dark cloud in the distance, where all used to be so bright to her. But from the uncertain future she was recalled by a change in the tone of Mrs. Fothergill’s letters. The early spring, instead of bringing new life to her dear charge, had seen her weaker and more suffering. Every letter brought more hopeless news, and

Rachel now felt that she should never see Miss Emmeline again. She became gradually resigned to the certainty of this; and when the last sad news confirmed it, even her aunt Catherine was won over for the time by the gentle patience of Rachel, and the way in which, putting aside her own loss, she went to sympathize with and comfort those—the invalid young dressmaker among the number—to whom the loss would be substantially great.

And time, with its soothing influence, passed on, and Stephen had at length met with a situation, and only waited for the character, which he knew he should receive from his present master, to enable him to close with his future one. But Mr. Sinclair still lingered near the quiet church-yard, among the vine-covered hills, where he had laid his daughter, and the answer was long in coming. Meanwhile, with heavy hearts, Rachel and her mother were busying themselves with making some arrangements about their removal, and they were thus employed one afternoon, when a familiar knock was heard at the garden-door, and, as if the past year had been a dream, Mrs. Fothergill walked in.

But Rachel knew it was reality, and the sight of her godmother seemed to bring her young lady back so vividly to her mind, that she could only cling to her arms and cry; and it was some time before she could listen to all that she so much wished to hear. By the time when Rachel had become quite calm again, her father had come in to tea; and when his surprise was over, Mrs. Fothergill said,—“You have never asked me what news I bring from my master, Stephen, though you wrote to him so long ago. You may be sure I have a message for you, but you won’t easily guess the purpose

of it. I am to tell you that if you like it as well, you will not need the character you sent for, as we are coming back to Boston, and my master offers you an increase of wages, as some recompense for the uncertainty you have been in."

This was indeed good news. Rachel raised her head again, and many eager questions assailed the bearer of them, but she went quietly on with her story.

"There is no longer any need for my master to fear the keen breezes of this part, and it was one of our sweet young lady's dying wishes that he should come back to the Hall, which he had got used to, and where he had done so much good. He will, maybe, not be here for a twelvemonth, and then it is most likely that he will bring with him the gentle lady I have mentioned to you, as our new mistress. Miss Emmeline wished it to be so; and, indeed, if there is any one that I could bear to see in the place of those that are dead and gone, it would be this lady, for she is all goodness; and if ever our old Hall looks like itself, it will be under her."

Rachel could scarcely fancy this would ever be, but if Mrs. Fothergill was satisfied, and her sweet Miss Emmeline had desired it, she was content; and she listened earnestly to the rest of her godmother's story. She had much to tell, and she spent the whole evening with them, fortunately free from aunt Catherine's observations, for that worthy but unlovable personage had gone out to spend the day with an old acquaintance.

And now Rachel quietly listened to Mrs. Fothergill's description of the last days of the fair Miss Emmeline. She had sunk by slow degrees, and without much pain. As her strength failed, her lovely meekness seemed to

grow more apparent ; and as earth faded from her view, the prospect of heaven seemed to grow more bright and certain, till, except for her father's sake, she was willing and even glad to die. To Rachel she had left all her own books, the workbox that she had always used, and her little dog ; and to the lady that she hoped would take her place, she had commended Rachel warmly, and no one had been forgotten. For weeks it had been a pleasure to her to think what each poor or sick person needed most, to be supplied to them at Christmas time. "And you may depend upon it," said Mrs. Fothergill, "all will be done as she desired." And then they began to talk about their own affairs, and the happy prospect before them once more. And Mrs. Fothergill told them she had mentioned Stephen's sister as a suitable person to keep the house in Hampshire, where a trustworthy person was all that was required, and where she would have nobody to quarrel with ; and Mr. Sinclair, hearing that she was Stephen's sister, had at once agreed. No one was particularly sorry that aunt Catherine should be comfortably provided for at such a distance ; for it was true, that, however kind they had tried to be to her, she had, from her want of Christian feeling, forbearance, and charity, been a constant little annoyance to them.

And now Mrs. Fothergill rose to go back to her old apartments at the Hall, leaving her dear friends in a state of thankfulness and quiet joy. But before she went out, she said to Rachel, "I have kept the best for the last, you see ; Miss Emmeline charged me to deliver this to you as a token of her dearest love," and Mrs. Fothergill gave Rachel a letter, the first and last that Miss Emmeline had ever written to her.

Her eyes were tearful as she read the few last words of her sweet young lady; but there was the sweetest and best kind of comfort in them.

“MY DEAR RACHEL,—I cannot write much, because when I stoop it makes me cough, but I think you will like to have a message from me written by my own hand. It will be as if we had been sitting under the beech-tree on the lawn at home, and I had been telling you what to do for me in the village. I am now lying near the open window, and the air is more warm and balmy than it ever was in England, and the scene before my eyes is beautiful. But my eyes will not behold it long. I am going to a fairer country. I am going to my real home. Oh! Rachel, my message is, help me always to praise God for that home, and for the love which bought it for me. The nearer we come to that home the better we can understand that love. Never cease to praise Him, Rachel. It is a blessed work. On earth, by labour; in heaven, by rest. Farewell, dear Rachel, you have been my best and dearest friend.

“EMMELINE.”

“Oh! mother,” said Rachel, long after this: it was at Christmas time, “I fancied, when I was at church, that Miss Emmeline was joining us in our hymns of praise—for the angel’s song and ours is the same to-day:—

“‘Glory to God: on earth good-will.’—Amen.”

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